SOLOMON'S Prescription,

For the Removal of the

PESTILENCE;

OR,

Any other Misery of a Distressed

KINGDOME:

Once more humbly tendred to publick Consideration, and enforc'd from the late dreadful Judgement by Fire.

By *M. M.*

Levit. 26. 23, 24.

And if you will not bee reformed by these things, but will walk contrary unto mee:
Then will I also walk contrary unto you, and will punish you yet seven times for your Sins.

Isa. 9. 13, 17.

For the People turneth not to him that smiteth them, neither do they seek the Lord of Hosts.
Therefore his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still.

Printed in the Year, MDCLXVII.

The Preface to the Reader.

Reader.

I Had more Objections in my own thoughts to the sending forth this Paper; and can fore-think more faults like to be found with it when sent forth, than I shall now stand to tell thee of, or make any answer for. But because amongst all those Objections, I met not with this, That it was impossible it should do any good, I thought the rest answerable; and because amongst all its faults, thou canst not (truly) finde this, That it was not intended for any good, I perswade my self all the rest are pardonable. What the design of it is, if thou art in haste, the Title will tell thee; if thou art at leasure, and thinkest it worth thy while, thou may'st finde it in the Book it self; so either way I might be excused from saying ought of it here. But somewhat for thy satisfaction know, when I considered the sore Judgement wherewith we have been visited, which so evidently declares Wrath to be gone forth from the Lord against us, I thought it might be an Essay very acceptable to God, and profitable to our selves, to do the best I could to make the voice of the Rod Articulate; that in the print of its lashes, not only Gods Wrath, but the sin he scourgeth us for, and the duty hee would drive us to, might be found in legible Characters, that even hee that runs may read them. When I looks on Affliction as a Medicine for a distempered Nation, I thought it was exceeding necessary, in order to its kindly working with us, to tell the nature, import, and use of it; and to give directions how it ought to be received. And though I acknowledge my self the meanest of Ten thousand for so great a Work, yet when I saw or heard of nothing so particular and distinct, as I thought the matter required, humbly depending upon, and imploring Divine assistance, I

made this attempt; wherein, whilst I have guided my self by the Physicians own Rules, and an impartial consideration of the nature of the Patient, I hope I have made no material (I am sure no wilful) mistake. This then was my great desire and hope, to bee by this undertaking, a worker together with Gods Providence for some good to the Nation. And surely no man hath cause to bee angry with this intention, or with any thing that flows sincerely from it. Had any man though the meanest among the People, in the time when Nineveh was threatned with destruction, given in a Catalogue of those sins they were guilty of, the removal of which could only prevent their Ruine; I am perswaded his endeavours would have been grateful to the Prince, his Nobles, and the People, though he had spoke to them all with more plainness and boldness than I have done. And I dare confidently expect the same, if our Fasting and Prayers bee not only for fashion-sake, but in as good earnest as theirs.

Two great miscarriages moreover I was prone to fear the most would be guilty of, which I have especially consulted against. The first, of being swallowed up so much with a sense of their suffering, as to bee indisposed for all profitable Reflections; and therefore fain would I turn mens eyes and thoughts from off this, to the sin that brought it; and have them only to consider the former, so much as to inform themselves more clearly of the evil of the latter. Oh what Out-cries we may hear up and down, what doleful times these are! So many Thousands dead this Week, so many another! The Plague got to this Town, and then to that! All Trading, as well as Persons, dead and gone! But were People formerly thus affected, whilst we were bringing this upon our selves? Did they cry out then, Oh how many Thousand Oaths are sworn in a Week? And how many Lies told? How many Thousands Drunk, and how many commit Lewdness? Had we had Weekly Bills of such Sins brought in, they would far have exceeded the largest Sums that ever yet the Mortality

lity made. But alas these with the most were light matters. Not half so many groans and tears for these, nor any such complaints of them; nor did the consideration of them make any sensible alteration amongst us. Now this I would fain obtain, to have these dares thought as much worse than these; and those actions as much worse than these sufferings, as the Disease is worse than Physick; and a Childes disobedience to his Parents, worse than his being Whip't: And he that should weep out of pitty for the Childe, when he sees it lash't; and yet could be content to hear him revile and abuse his Father, I should think to be a person of more kindness, than Discretion; and for him to be more concerned for the Childes Smart, than the Parents Honour, argues him to have no true love for either.

And here by the way let mee give a Caution, viz. That no man bewray so much folly as to argue, That because in mercy God may abate and remove his heavy Judgements, before many, or perhaps any of these sins I have mentioned are put away from amongst us; and because wee may have our former health and plenty restor'd, whilst there is no such Reformation of disorders as I have exhorted to, that therfore our Sufferings were not intended to chastise us for those sins, nor to bring us to this Reformation. If thou be an Atheist or Infidel that makest this Argument, who believest not there is a God, or that he concerns himself with our Affairs, but that all things come by Nature or Chance or I know not what, I shal then leave thee to receive satisfaction (if nothing sooner will give it) there, where all such as thou by the feeling of Divine Vengeance, are at once convinc'd what the sin is which hath deserved it, and that there is a God who inflicts it; but if thou be a Christian, then I would wish thee well to examine the nature of the thing (that I mean, which thou thinkest God hath not punished us for, because it is yet continued) and upon the issue of that examination, pass thy judgement. It's much to be feared thou wilt see Drunkards, and hear Swear-

ers, after the Plague may be ceas'd; and will they think therefore that these, and the like Wickednesses, did not provoke God to afflict us? But rather stay, if thou art in doubt, till the great reckoning day, till thou hast heard all mens Accounts cast up, and those Actions which are then approved confidently pronounce no sins; but not at all those that survive the heaviest Judgements here on Earth, which may be sent to punish and reform those that were guilty of them; since hardned sinners may frustrate some ends of an affliction, and all are not followed here, as Pharaoh was. No, I say, do not justifie all such actions, though thou shouldst hear them openly defended, and applauded, and those men punish'd that dare to oppose and contradict them, and that opposition made the only sin. This lower World is full of such mad mistakes and confusions, but all will shortly be set streight.

The other miscarriage that I feared men would be apt to run into, and which I have laboured to provide against, was, That though they might be convinc'd that sin in the general, was the cause of all our miseries, yet hardly that it was their sin, or their friends, but some bodies else that they don't love; and so shift it off to this or that Party, whom they would have punish'd, had they been in Gods stead. *Such a strong self-love there is in every man, that his fancy shapes God very much in a likeness to himself.* Even the vilest sinners *Psal.* 50. 21. thought God such an one as themselves. *And consequently they account themselves, and all their concernments dear to God, and so would interpret all his Providences in favour of them, to right their quarrel, and to avenge them of their enemies; for thus would they prescribe God, might they be called to his council. All would fain carry it, that God is of their Party, and against those whom they are against; every man will be more inclined to accuse others than himself: Nay, and hence it oft falls out, that they who have espoused any sin, will be so far from thinking ill of it, that they'l rather accuse the con-*

contrary vertue; and ſo godlineſs it ſelf may ſometimes bear the blame, or however the moſt godly and unblameable men. The Pillars of a Land ſometimes are accounted the Peſts of it, on which, whilſt ſome men blinde with rage, lay their hands to pluck them down, they are about to do themſelves, and the people with whom they are, the ſame courteſie that Sampſon *did to the Philiſtine Lords. They who were the Salt to ſavour a corrupt World, were accounted the filth and offcouring of all things.* Ahab *will ſooner count* Elijah *than himſelf, a trobler of* Iſrael. *And when any miſchief befals the Empire, then the poor Chriſtians muſt bee thrown to the Lyons. Thus I fear amongſt us, many bitter and undeſerved cenſures will be paſt by one againſt another; which great ſin I have done my beſt to conſult againſt, whil'ſt I have chiefly laboured to bring every man to a reflection upon himſelf; whilſt I have ſtudied faithfully to deal, both to this man and that, his ſhare in procuring our miſeries; and whilſt I have made the Diviſions and Parties that are amongſt us, which occaſion this Cenſorious neſs, one great cauſe of our Sufferings. However one or other may interpret what I have done; I am pretty indifferent, only I hope I have ſaid nothing, which need make any man preſently fall a confuting me, which, Ile promiſe you, its an hard thing in theſe daies to eſcape, ſay what you will. 'Tis againſt Sin only I have a quarrel; if any guilty perſon (as the Phariſees when Chriſt preacht) ſhall think I mean him; let him once again know, That it is not againſt Small or Great, but the Sins of All, that I am entred into the Liſts; and I hope they'l rather ſee to forſake, than vindicate them. But if otherwiſe, if leave may be granted, I dare undertake to evidence, that Sin is that which brings Suffering, and that thoſe things I have mentioned as the ſins of our Nation, are indeed ſuch. Yea, and if it be not thought Immodeſty to foreſtall the Readers judgement, I dare add, That I have ſpoken very great Truth and Reaſon in the matters moſt liable to Exception, notwithſtanding all the weakneſſes and*

disadvantage in the representing; which I readily acknowledge to be many and great. But I have already exceeded the due bounds of a Preface; wherefore to conclude all, Let censure as they shall finde meet; only let me make a solemn Profession (which is the more credible from one, who hath no great reason to expect to out-live the General Desolation) that, so far as I know my own heart, I have spoke nothing with a design to exasperate any, or to humour and gratifie one Faction, by disgracing or unweighing against another; but it hath been my care to speak the very truth, according to the infallible Word of God, and the clearest apprehensions of my own Soul, with an unfeigned desire to discover what indeed those sins are, which we especially smart for, that the inconsiderate and ignorant may be informed, the guilty humbled, wickedness rooted out, God appeased, and all our mercies, both spiritual and temporal, restored and continued; and these designs shall be followed with my prayers: (and I hope with those too thou readst me) but how far the success may Answer either, I must leave to the Readers improvement of, and Gods blessing upon my well-intended, though weak endeavours.

Thine in the service of the Gospel.

M. M.



1 KING. 8. 37, 38, 39.

If there be in the Land a Famine, if there be Pestilence, Blasting, Mildew, Locust, or if there be Caterpiller: or if their Enemy besiege them in the land of their Cities, whatsoever Plague, whatsoever Sickness there be.

What Prayer and Supplication soever be made by any man, or by all thy people Israel, which shall know every man the Plague of his own heart, and spread forth his hands towards this House.

Then hear thou in Heaven thy dwelling place, and forgive, and do and give to every man according to his waies; whose heart thou knowest, (for thou, even thou only knowest the hearts of the children of men.)

THE good and gracious God, the Ruler and Governour of the World, and the disposer of all events, doth nothing rashly or in vain, and therefore hath made it the Duty of the Sons of men, wisely to weigh and consider of his Providences, and to learn instructions thence, as well as from the Revelations of his minde in his written word, *Micah 6.9.* We are bid to hear the Rod. And though in the bounteous dispensations of his favours, wee can assign no higher cause than his own meer Grace and good will, which is accomplisht in the doing good to his Creatures, yet in the inflicting of Judgement, which is his strange work, we may be sure to finde something out of himself moving him to it. It cannot be well conceived how man should ever be the subject of pain or sorrow, did

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not sin render him passible, and open a way for the Sword to enter his Bowels, and give it that edge and force which causeth it to pierce the deeper, and to wound more sensibly. Now as a distemper which ariseth from a Surfeit, is to be look'd at only as an effect of Intemperance, and is not to be quarrel'd at, but the cause of it to be blam'd; and as the Chyrurgions searching into the festered place, is not a wound, but a discovery of the depth of the sore, in order to its cure; so are the Judgements which God sends on a people, onely to bee regarded as the Symptomes of, and means to Cure that disorder and distemperedness within our selves, which doth as it were naturally produce such sufferings. It is not the breaking forth of some inward distemper, which is our sickness it self; but 'tis rather the effect of it. The spots discernable upon the Infected, are not the *Plague*, but the Tokens. Thus are we to account the most grievous things that light upon us, but as the manifestations and fruits of something worse within us. Now look when men by outward signs finde out those ill humours that lodge within them, they labour not so much to repress the out-side sore, as to correct and remove the inward cause. Hee that when the Pox come out upon a Childe, would drive them in, shall but make sure and hasten his death; but rather will the wise Physician prescribe means for their kindely coming forth and ripening, that by them the corrupt humours may be vented and vanish. Hee that is troubled with heats and flushings, arising from his Liver, would but play the fool to lay Plaisters to himself, but will rather take Physick, that may inwardly purge him. Even thus also suffering having its birth and nourishment from sin, the way for the redress of that, is the removal of this. And by no other means can a kindely cure bee effected. Indeed sometimes, an affliction may bee taken off in greater wrath than

than it was laid on, when people so revolt, that God will strike them no more, but because they are joyned to their Idols, will let them alone; but this is but the making way for surer Judgements to follow. And thus will it be wheresoever wee are taken from under the Rod, before wee are brought under the yoke. If outward sufferings turn to hardness of heart; desperate is the case of such a people or person, however they may applaud themselves in their deliverance; this is but like a venome, which may seem to leave a finger or hand, but strikes up to the heart; this is but a skinning over the sore, which will wrankle beyond the possibility of a cure. It is but a kinde of lightning before death, the surest fore-runner and saddest presage, that all our happiness is giving up the ghost, and departing from us: Now we must needs acknowledge it Infinite Mercy, and Goodness in our God, when wee have reduc'd our selves to such a dangerous estate by sin, any way to discover it to us, though by sharp and smarting means, so that these prevent our final ruine. Oh that I could inculcate this into my own, and the Readers Soul, that before we felt any pain, we lodg'd within us a greater evil; and that what we now feel, proceeds from the hand of Love, if wee are wise to improve it. Poor man, thou cryest out of Poverty, loss of Relations, sickness and pain, but didst thou not know it? Thou carriedst these, yea, and worse than all these about thee before, when yet thou couldst go up and down quietly enough, and never complain. Couldst thou not swear, be drunk, commit lewdness, over-reach, defraud and oppress thy brother, profane the Lords day, neglect the worship of God, both in publick and private, make a jest of Scripture, and mock at Holiness, and scorn and deride, hate and persecute the most serious Christians? These, these, oh senseless sinner, were thy sickness and misery, these conceived and bore about in their bowels,

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all that sorrow which since they have brought forth. Sin goes big with all the most dreadful Evils in the world; even Hell it self, is its natural off-spring; but alas thou feleft no hurt, no smart in all this. Thou couldst grieve the Spirit of God, and trample under foot thy Redeemers Blood, and run fresh Spears into his side, and nails into his hands and feet, and yet never once in any sober sadness reflect upon thy self, and say, *What have I done?* Thy sin was thy pleasure, thy sport, thy trade, so sweet, so profitable, that thou thoughtest it as dear to thee, as thy life it self, and couldst never believe thou wast doing thy self so much mischief, while thou wast pleasing thy flesh, or filling thy purse. How hard a task had hee undertook, that would have gone about then to have convinc't thee, that thy most delightful gainful sins, were indeed thy wounds, thy losses, and would be thy undoing? And yet thus it was. He that is swallowing down poyson, because it is sweet, or wraps up in gilded pills, is then poisoning himself, even whilst the sweetness is in his mouth, and his palate is pleased with the relish, though perhaps he may then laugh at him, that cries out it is poyson, and bids him therefore as hee loves his life, spit it out: what shall you perswade him that can bee hurtful, whose taste is so pleasant? But even he himself, when he feels it burn his heart, and gripe his bowels, and torture his inward parts, will then cry out hee is poysoned, and roar out in the anguish and bitter torment which hee feels; but all this his pain, is but the working of that poison, which then became mortal, whilst it went down so pleasantly. You may hear people when in sufferings, make sad complaints and lamentations, that would even melt one's heart to hear them: Then they can cry out, Oh my Wife, or Husband, or Childe is dead! What shall I do? How can I bear it? Oh what course shall I take to get bread for my self and family? cry the Poor, what

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must wee ſtarve for want of relief? Oh how doleful is our caſe! And they that are under ſickneſs, and ſtruck with the viſible hand of God, how do their hearts ſink within them like a ſtone? How pale and ghaſtly do their looks of a ſuddenbecome? Now they are even at their wits end, oh any thing, any thing for help? What pitcous moans now they can make! oh their head, their heart, their back! Now with what aſtoniſhments and horrours do they every moment expect to breathe out their laſt? with what amazing fears, what dark and diſmal apprehenſions of the ſtate they are entring upon, are they now ſeiz'd? what paſſionate out-cries may you hear from them? what muſt they dye? is there no remedy? no hope? Muſt they then leave the world they have lov'd ſo much, and liv'd in ſo long? And bid farewel to their friends and companions, their houſes and lands, their ſports and merriments, and gainful trading, and all for ever, oh that ever they ſhould be born to ſee ſuch a day! that their dwellings ſhould be within the reach of the Contagion! That this dreadful death of all others ſhould befal them! That they ſhould be left thus deſolate and forlorn, forſaken of all, abandoned of their neareſt relations, in this time of their greateſt extremity, when they moſt need ſuccour and comfort! Thouſands ſuch hearty groanings, and bitter wailings may you hear: but had you come in amongſt theſe people, a few daies ſince, oh what quite other kinde of men were they? How jolly and ſecure, following their pleaſures or buſineſs, and would it's like, have laught at him that ſhould have told them of a death ſo near, or of the Judgement that follows after. How few, alas! how very few ſhould you have then found amongſt them, who did at any time cry out, oh blinde minde that is ſo ignorant of God! oh carnal heart that is ſo averſe from his Laws! Oh how unevenly do I walk! Baſe treacherous wretch that I am, thus to depart from God! Vile

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and unthankful creature, that ever I should offend a God of such mercy and love! oh that I was delivered from the power of my lusts, the temptations of Satan, and all the diseases of my soul! Alas! instead of such becoming language as this, you might from the most have heard swearing and cursing, idle songs, filthy and ribald speeches; or at the best, frothy, foolish, or worldly unprofitable discourse. Poor stupid sinner, then thou wast stabbing and destroying thy self, then thou wast seiz'd with the most deadly infection. Then had it been no uncharitableness nor absurdity, to have set a *Lord have Mercy upon me*, in Capital Letters, on thy forehead; yea, wise and holy men saw it there in that wickedness that broke out in thy life, and look't upon thee as fitter for a Pesthouse, than converse; as one not to be accompanied with, except in order to thy recovery. Now must we not all in general say, that it is tender compassion in the great Benefactor to mankinde, that he will so far concern himself with us in our miserable estate, as by any means to awaken us to a sense of it, whileſt there is any possibility of a Cure? Scottish wretches, that measure all events by their correspondency to flesh and blood, will not beleive there can bee love in such sore Afflictions. They to whom Sin was sweet, will hardly bee brought to like well of those potions which are administred on purpose to make it bitter. How will they loathe the Physick, who love their very Sickness? But all whose eyes God shall open by his Providences, will see abundant cause to bless and praise him for his Love, in working them to a timely apprehension of that, which otherwise had been their ruine. Tell me man, Is it a not wonderful mercy to be awakened on this side Hell, let the means bee what they will? If thy present smart makes thee judge otherwise, couldst thou but come to the speech of those undone souls, whose hopes are perisht for ever, they would soon satisfie thee

that every thing is tenderneſs; and very great mercy that comes to diſcover ſin, and prevent everlaſting miſery. Oh lay this to heart in time man, and ſtay not too long, till feeling give thee a too clear and undeniable demonſtration of this truth. If now thou crieſt out thou art undone, becauſe thy Trading's gone, thy Friends dead, or thy ſelf in danger of death, and lookſt not about thee to find out, and be affected with greater evils than all theſe, and ſo to eſcape much greater ſufferings than yet thou haſt felt, 'tis but a little while before thou ſhalt find Arguments reaching to thy very ſoul, which will make thee acknowledge what I now ſay. Oh then, when thou findeſt thy ſelf under the Vials of Divine Vengeance, and haſt taken up thy reſidence amongſt the Devils and damned Ghoſts in the midſt of the burning Lake, what ſlight inconſiderable things, not worth the mentioning, will all the miſeries thou underwenteſt in thy life time, appear to thee? What deſirable things will the moſt pinching poverty, the moſt grievous pain then ſeem, compar'd to what thou wilt endure? What very trifles, meer flea-bitings wilt thou then judge Famines, Plagues, and heavieſt Judgements that can light upon men whilſt in the body? Oh what wouldſt thou then give to be where thou waſt, when thou thoughteſt thy ſelf at the worſt? And wouldſt entertain ſuch a ſtate with joy and thankfulneſs, which before thou thought'ſt the moſt miſerable that a man could poſſibly be caſt into. Then thou wilt confeſs, that to be ſhut up from the ſociety of men, hath nothing of doleſulneſs in it, compar'd to thy being ſhut up under the burning wrath of an unreconciled God. Then at length, whether thou wilt or no, thou ſhalt ſee ſin, and cry out of ſin, and acknowledge 'tis thy ſin that hath ruin'd thee. Now thou canſt in thy cold faint manner by rote, ſay thou art a great ſinner, and perhaps mayſt curſorily cry God mercie; but then from the

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very inwards of thy soul shalt thou repent of sin, with such a kind of hellish repentance, as is proper to those damned Spirits in the midst of their tortures; such an one as thy Predecessor *Iudas* felt the beginnings of, when he ran to the Halter for comfort. Then thou shalt not only with those, *Rev.* 16. 11. pour out thy blasphemies against God, the breath of whose fury, like a stream of brimstone, kindles and keeps alive those unquenchable flames: but thou shalt also load thy self with heavier accusations, than ever any of Gods Ministers did whilst thou wast upon earth. Then thou shalt feelingly confess thy self stark mad and besotted, and wonder at thy own stupendious folly, that ever thou shouldst so wilfully and resolutely plunge thy self into that place of woe. And this will be none of the least aggravations of thy torment, to reflect upon those many wayes which God us'd with thee, to have convinc't thee of thy sin and danger, before it had been too late; of all which thou madest light, and wouldst not be caught by them; *When the hand of God here was lifted up, thou wouldst not see; but then thou shalt see*, thou shalt know. Then thou wilt easily grant, that the sharpest suffering that had so shewn thee sin, as to have saved thee from this wrath, had been the happiest providence that ever befell thee. Would any man that hath not lost his wits, as well as his gratitude, take it ill from his Neighbour that should waken him out of his sweet sleep, when the house is on fire over his ears; yea, though he pinch and beat him black and blew, that he may speedily rouze him? Now from all I have said then, I would gather, that the heavy hand of God upon a Nation, as it is laid on for sin, so for the most part not meerly for punishment and destruction, but to discover to us the evil of our doings, that they may be repented of, and put away. And so there is much mercy in the midst of these Judgements, if they be improv'd to those

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unto which their nature is fitted for, and which we are commanded to make of them. The greatest of these calamities to those that remain, are but like the sounding of a Trumpet, the giving of an Alarm, the shooting off a Warning-piece, the hanging forth of a white Flag; and all speak to this purpose, *That though the sins of a Nation have been exceeding great and provoking, whereby the anger of the most holy God is justly kindled against them, which he sends these his Judgements to testifie, that yet he is willing to put up all former affronts that have been offered, if now at length they will become a reformed people, and with detestation of their sins, turn from them unto God and his holy wayes; but if not, that his anger shall not be turned away, but his hand stretched out still, till he hath made a full end of them, and will follow them with Judgement after Judgement, till they are cast into the lowest Hell.* So that you see plainly, the Rod hath a voice, and is a kind of Sermon, but comes nearer to the sense, and will force an observance more than meer words could do. We could chuse whether we would read a Bible or good Book, or regard a Minister or godly Neighbour, giving us this very Lesson as plainly, but in a more gentle manner. We could stop our ears, or turn our backs, or harden our hearts against all the most awakening, startling truths: We could make a jest of the most dreadful threatnings in the Book of God, denounc't against those very sins we committed; we could laugh at our Teachers and Reprovers, and scorn at the offers of their love for our recovery. And when we were sunk into such a deplorable estate, wanting nothing of falling head-long into hell, but the withdrawing of that miraculous patience which kept us out every moment, then in infinite mercy did our God, who like a wise Physitian, suits his potions to the nature of the disease, and temper of his Patients, make bare his Arm, and reveal himself and his

pleasure to us; in a way most likely to affect us, if we who yet survive, be not obstinately bent upon our own destruction. Let us not then murmure or repine; for if our disease be grown to such an height, that without stronger medicines it would be our death. Is it not all the reason in the world that we should submit to those prescriptions which are proportion'd to it? Whoever thou art that sufferest, thou hast reason to be content, for its thy own doing; thou might'st have hearkned in time to the plain Word of God, and so have escap't this severer discipline. Thou who wast wilfully deaf to the still voice, is it not of thy self that a Message is delivered to thee in such terrible thundrings? If thou hadst not clos'd thy eyes against the gentle light, they had never been so forcibly held open by the hand of God, to see those things which are as clear as the Noon-days Sun. If the Word of God had sunk into thy soul, thou hadst not thus felt his arrows in thy flesh, nor been taught thus with bryars and thorns, like them *Judg.* 8. 16. God delights not in the smarting and torring of his creatures; but yet he that hath bidden Parents by the Rod of Correction to drive out the folly that is bound up in the heart of a Childe; he so loves the sons of men, that he will not spare his Rod when it may (and if it be not mens own fault, will) conduce to their advantage. When there is no way but either the gangren'd member, or the life must go, who would not lose that, to save this? Still then here is mercy: Afflictions, beside the frightful noise, have a clear sense and meaning; beside the heat that scorcheth, they have an informing light. God might in a moment have snatcht thee from earth to hell, and there have convinc't thee in such a manner, as leaves no room for thy Reformation, when as now he hath taken away thy Neighbor, and but threatned thee with death, and afforded thee some breathing-time for thy preparation, and for the prevention

vation of thy endless death. Thou who art reading these lines, might'st have been the first at whom God had levell'd his arrows; thou might'st have been snatcht out of the world suddenly, without any other warning than the Word hath given thee, as it may have happened to others. But since it hath not thus befallen thee, whatever thou may'st feel or fear further, thou canst not but acknowledge God treats thee very graciously. Whilst thou art on this side hell, thou may'st learn much by the severest dispensations; and though this seem a cutting, piercing way of teaching, yet it is (as I said before) best suited to thy dulness and sensleſness, and most likely to prevail with thee, as not needing so much the pains of a particular application to thy self, which thou would'st not be brought to in the hearing of the most searching Sermons. If it was but forgetting them, and there was an end of all; but now God speaks words which may be felt, that shall stick longer by thee, and upon which he will keep thy most serious thoughts whether thou wilt or no. It did require indeed deep and frequent Consideration to convince thy self of thy lost undone estate by reason of sin, whilst thou wast swimming in plenty and prosperity, and couldst bid thy soul take its ease. Alas! what was it to hear of the wrath of God, a never-dying worm, an unquenchable fire, whilst men felt all well with themselves; and look't upon those very sins as essential to their happiness, which the Word represented as their misery? They were not then likely to think very ill of them, whilst they perceiv'd no hurt they did them; but now when God shall manifest his hatred (and consequently the evil) of sin, by demonstrations reaching to the very bone; he that groans under these loads, may very readily infer, That surely sin is an exceeding great evil, which pulls down such Judgements from a compassionate God; which yet at the highest, are but Fore-

runners of infinitely worse to follow, even everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, without timely repentance. And when thou hast so far made advantage of thy afflictions, as thence to inform thy self of the evil of sin in general, and of thy particular sin, to know that sin is a *Plague*, and to know what is the *Plague* of thy own heart, then thou art in a very fair way towards deliverance and healing. And this is made evident to us, by the words of *Solomon*, which we propounded at the beginning, which I intend not particularly to insist on, but to make them the foundation of a more general and lax Discourse.

The Import of them seems to be this, That any man under any Calamity whatever, that should be sensible of the sin that procured it, and betake himself to God by Prayer and true Repentance; for him the Wise Man prays, that he may have Audience and Mercy. For such a man is fit to have the Plaister taken off his sore, on whom it hath had a kindly influence answerable to the end whereunto God sent it; namely, to shew his sin, humble him for, and turn him from it.

Two things on the By only, I shall hint from these words:

1. That we may very well turn this prayer of *Solomons* into a promise, and conclude, that what he begg'd of God, and that with a particular reference to the Children of *Israel*, shall be granted to every man in any place, performing the conditions here described.

2. Note, That under the word *Know*, is compriz'd the whole performance of all that is required in other places of Scripture, in order to the obtaining of the pardon of sin, and the removal of those Judgements which it had procured. There is nothing more common in Holy Writ, than the making words of knowledge, inclusive of the affections and practice also. To know God, frequent-

ly

ly comprehends our whole duty to him, for our knowledge of him being the beginning and ground-work of all other Duties, and producing them where it is in clearness and power, may very well be put for all. According to this is our English phrase, I'le make you know your Superiours, that is, perform your duty to them. So here to know the *Plague* of our own heart (by which is meant sin, the disease of the soul) is as much as to be convinc't of it, to see its odiousness, to be truly humbled for, and sincerely resolved to forsake it. That it must be a working practical Knowledge, not resting in meer conviction, is evident from the foregoing words, which mention the prayer proceeding from those *who know the Plague of their own hearts*; the same also follows, *and spread forth their hands to this house*; that is, make their Addresses to God, with some kinde of particular reference to the Temple, where he did in a more special manner reside and manifest himself: And thus *Daniel* in Captivity opened his Window toward *Jerusalem*, *Dan.* 6. 10. Now he that should thus come to God, what is it for? Not only for deliverance, but also to confess sin, the cause of his misery; and if so, then must he be truly grieved for his provocations of the most holy God, and this could not be without promises, and purposes of a Reformation.

Now I need not stand to prove what I before mentioned, that whoever is thus affected, shall, if not be freed from the temporal affliction he lies under, yet be secured from the hurt of it, and have greater blessings bestowed; this, I say, I need not stand to prove, the Scripture being every where so full of Examples and Promises that demonstrate it. And indeed it is fully evidenc't in the very tenor of the Covenant of Grace, which assures pardon and salvation, and all things truly good for us, upon the condition of our coming to, and receiving

Christ; which none can do, but they who are sensible of their need of him, who have seen the evil of sin, both as to its nature and effects, and are desirous to be delivered from the guilt and pollution, and of his sense of sin, and aversion from it in heart and life, in true Repentance; and upon condition of this it was that Solomon pray'd for, and God frequently promiseth Mercy; and particularly see his answer to this very prayer, and the promise hee made to grant it, 2 Chron. 7. 13, 14.

Where-ever then the Judgements of God are more Eminently inflicted on a People, it is a sign there are some heinous Transgressions which have deserved them. If the *Plague*, or any such calamity, seize a Nation, it speaks this much, That there is a *Plague* in the hearts of that people; some such wickedness which provok'd God to pour out his Wrath upon them. Sin is as the body, suffering usually as the shadow that attends it; the one is as fire, the other as smoak that proceeds from it. Wherefore by the putting away of sin only, can we escape the threatned Wrath, or rescue our selves out of that we feel. This is very plain, If the knowledge and removal of the Plague of our hearts, conduce to our Recovery, then our being seized with it was our misery: and therefore the Cause being removed, the Effect will follow. If the entertainment of *Sheba* into *Abell*, bring *Joab* and an Army against it, then to deliver him to them, is the only way to procure their departure, 2 *Sam.* 20.

These several Truths then are plain, and the words wee have taken notice of naturally afford them.

1. That God is the Supreme efficient cause of all the sufferings we lye under. *Is there evil in a City* (of affliction that is) *and hath not he done it?*

2. It is for the sin of a People that God laies these sufferings upon them.

3. It is a most proper seasonable Duty, in times of such Calamity,

Calamity, to make inquiry into our waies, that we may discover what is most likely to be the Cause; what is that *Achan* that troubles us? This is the great thing whereof we are call'd in the day of Adversity to consider; and accordingly, the most of my business in my following Discourse, shall be the practice of this direction; for I shall not particularly handle any of these Observations.

4. If we finding out our sin, bewail and abhor it, put it far from us, and betake our selves to God for mercy and pardon, *then will he hear in heaven, and forgive*; remove from us our Miseries, and restore his Loving-kindness.

I shall only answer one Objection by the way, and so pass on to what I chiefly design. Some may say, They have been sensible of, and in some measure humbled for sin, and yet notwithstanding have been held under as sharp, and as long sufferings as others. Here we must distinguish (1) Betwixt National and Personal Judgements: (2) Betwixt the Ends and Reasons why they are inflicted: (3) Betwixt the Cross and the Curse of it, And so I answer:

(1) If the Judgement bee National, as Sword, Famine, Captivity, some great Mortality, and this sent for a National common sin, it cannot here be expected, That the Humiliation of some few particular persons should alwaies serve for the averting such Calamities. Nay, the Righteous themselves may be involved in them; as wee finde there were many good men carried Captive with the rest into *Babylon*, amongst which, were *Daniel*, and the three Children. Indeed sometimes wee read of one or more standing in the Gap, and preventing a deluge of wrath, as *Moses* oft did, but there was then also some kinde of general Humiliation; for of the people its said, *When God slew them, then they sought him*, *Psal.* 78. 34. And though *Moses* prevailed thus farre, that they

might not utterly be destroyed, yet very sore Judgements were frequently laid upon them. *Noah* deliver'd himself and Familie only, not the old World. *Lot* himself and Children, but not *Sodom* and *Gomorrah*; though then God graciously condescended to have spared them all for the sake of ten righteous persons, could they have been found amongst them. But at another time, so great and general were the sins of the *Jews*, that God tells the Prophet, Though *Noah*, *Samuel*, and *Daniel* were there, they should only deliver their own souls, *Ez.* 14. 14. Ordinarily, 'tis an Humiliation in some competent measure proportion'd to the sin, which must appease the wrath of God broke out upon a people. When all *Nineveh* had sinned, and was threatned, it must be a general Repentance that could prevent the Execution of those threatnings.

(2) Though particular persons may not by their Reformation procure mercy to a whole Land, nor yet free themselves from the outward stroke which lights upon the Body of the Nation, yet shall not their labour be lost, but God will have a special eye to them in the common ruine; and what is in wrath to others, shall be in love to them. They shall have either such preservation from, or deliverance out of the Temporal Calamity; or such support in, and advantage by it, that they shall have abundant reason to acknowledge, that their Repentance and Supplications were not in vain. Fear not, poor Christian, if thou be but a mourner in *Zion*, one whose heart bleeds for thine own and others transgressions; though thy dwelling be in the midst of prophane, rebellious sinners, yet thou shalt not be lost in a croud. It is not the oaths and blasphemies, and crying sins of those about thee, that shall drown thy prayers; but God will hear, and one way or other graciously answer them. If thy Soul, thy everlasting Life be given thee

for

for a prey (as a temporal life was promised to *Ebedmelech*, *Jer.*39.19. and to *Baruch*, *Jer.*45.5.) thou hast sure no reason to complain. What though the same disease, and death seize thee, as doth them? It comes not for the same reason, nor shall it have the same effect. What though thou wast carried in the same Ship with Traitors into another Country, where they are to be executed, and thou advanced to the highest dignity, was this any hurt to thee? If death take thee from the pressures of all sorts, under which thou mayest now groan, and from the evil to come, and translate thee into the glorious Presence, and full fruition of the ever-blessed God, this is sure a different thing from being snatcht away from thy happiness into the society and torments of the devil and his angels. Wherefore thou hast good reason to acknowledge Gods distinguishing mercy in those his dealings with thee, which to sense may be the same with what others meet with. I might add also the spiritual advantages which accrue to the godly by afflictions sanctified, but the other contains this in it, and much more.

(3) Thy afflictions may perhaps be more for Tryal, than punishment; and so may be continued, notwithstanding thy endeavour to find out and forsake sin, but when they have wrought that particular end for which God sent them, they shall be removed. Or they may befall thee for the Cause of God, and a Testimony of a good Conscience, and then thou hast more cause to rejoyce in them, than impatiently to seek their removal. Whatever they be, see thou make this use of them, to be more deeply humbled for, and set against sin, which is remotely at least, the cause of all suffering; and to demean thy self patiently and submissively *under the mighty hand of God, and in his due time he will exalt thee.*

It being then evident, that the knowledge of sin is

so

so necessary to the removing the heavy hand of an offended God from off an afflicted Nation: Surely, the great work we are all call'd to in this day of our sore Visitation, is to give all diligence to know why it is that God contendeth with us, and wherein we have incens'd him thus to poure out his wrath upon us; that so we turning from our particular sins, he may turn away his anger, and comfort us. And in order to this, it is the duty of every one, who is an Inhabitant of the Land, in the first place to call himself to a strict account, and impartially to look into his heart, and review his life, and see what he hath done toward the hastening these Judgements upon us, and accordingly apply himself to God, to do his utmost for their removal. Every man hath brought a faggot to the kindling of the Common Flame; wherefore every man should bring his Bucket to quench it. And here let me warn every soul to beware of a most dangerous temptation, wherewith its like they'l be assaulted, to wit, to think but very meanly and slightly of their own particular sins, as if they had little or no influence, to the bringing on us such grievous calamities; and that partly out of self-love, which makes us very tender how we accuse our selves, and ready to extenuate all our own faults; partly, because we may yet be free from the smart, and therefore take but a cold superficial view of our selves; and partly, because when we look upon the evils in gross under which the Nation lies, we can discern no proportion betwixt them, and our personal offences; and this comes much from our ignorance of the heinous nature of the least sin. Now reflect on thy self, Reader, and tell me, Hast thou not been very ready in the general to cry out, That 'tis for the sins of the Nation we are now afflicted; and to flie out very bitterlie against this party, or that; this abuse, and the other corruption in Church or State, but in the mean time, hast been very

backward,

backward, to charge and accuse thy self, as thou ought-est, as if thou wast not a member of this sinful and suffering Nation. Let thy Conscience answer whether this hath not been thy way, and judge whether this be a just performance of thy duty, if every person thus shift it from himself, where will Repentance be found, and what's like to become of us? If there were an Army to go forth against the Enemy, and one person should draw back, and say, what can he do? He cannot be miss in such a multitude, nor can he do much against such a numerous force, and therefore desires he may stay at home; and another come, and use the same excuse, and so a third, and at length all that have the same reason, (which indeed every man may pretend to) what's like to become of the war? And yet alas! how doth this senseless Objection generallie prevail in the world, in a case somewhat different from this; viz. hindring that courageous zeal, and industry, for the promoting of Religion, and for the destruction of the Devils Kingdome, which beseems every Member of Christ that is listed into his service, by the Baptismal Covenant, wherein he was engaged to fight under the Banner of Christ, and that without putting in this Condition; that he should have good store of Company to joyn with, and back him: for without this he may come off a Conqueror. But yet now cries one; What can I do against an overflowing torrent of wickedness? What can I, a weak and single person do, for the advancement of Holiness, against a wicked raging multitude? what canst thou do! why thou canst strive and di-, canst not? But what then, shall no-body do any thing, because every man is but one, and hath many difficulties to encounter? Or wilt thou therefore do nothing, because thou canst not expect a success answerable to thy desires? Or may we not joyn, and unite our strength, and all set to a shoulder, for the carrying

on

on of the work of the Lord? Be sure thou shalt alwaies have difficulties to try thee: for 'tis thy heart God calls for, he needs not thy hands. Why Man, if thou wilt alone in all the world, having such a Leader and Captain as Christ, wouldst thou not stick to his Cause, and keep to his Colours, and dye fighting? If not, thou deservest not the name of a Christian. And if there bee so few who seek the things of Christ, with how much more vigour and resolution ought those few to bestir themselves, and not also forsake their Lord, because the rest of the World do? but still they should imagine they hear the awakning words of Christ to his Disciples, sounding in their ears, *What, will ye forsake me also?* But this was a digression.

Let not then, I say, the consideration of thy being a single person, abate any thing of the measures of thy sorrow for sin: for if all do thus, as all may have the same ground, there will bee none found to charge sin on themselves, and acknowledge Gods Justice in all his sharp dispensations.

Wherefore, whoever thou art, into whose hands these lines may fall, my earnest request to thee; yea, my strict Injunction, is this, that thou presently get alone, and soberly sit down to the intent study of thy self: Beg of God, to help thee in this work, and do thou endeavour with all faithfulness, as in his sight, who will shortly judge thee before all the world, to rip open to thy self all the baseness that hath been lodg'd in thy heart, all the Lusts that have been entertained there. And consider well thy life, what known sins thou hast been guilty of, what Duties thou hast omitted. And then with all speed and seriousness, betake thy self to God, acknowledge thy own vileness, plainly confess, that 'tis this or that thy sin, thy looseness, thy covetousness, thy pride, idleness, or voluptuousness, that may have helpt forward his anger.

And

And own it as a token of undeserved Grace, that all manner of woes have not seiz'd upon thee, in thy own person, that whilst so many are afflicted, and taken out of the world before thee; thou hast warning and leave to prepare, for what may befal thee. And see that thou layest home to represent to thy self, with all its heightning circumstances and aggravations, that the review of it may more deeply affect thee; help thy Meditations with those doleful miseries so many now lye under, and that in part for thy sins, which yet are but the beginning of woes to the impenitent; and then think, if these are no jesting matters, what is the sin that procured them: Think of that matchless love, that continued patience, that clear light, those great Engagements, Purposes, and frequent promises that thou hast sinned against; till at length, these considerations work thee to such an apprehension of sin, that thou canst not conceive of any suffering suited to its demerit, but the everlasting wrath of the most dreadful Majesty: and till thou acknowledge not only thy contributing to the present calamity; but that if the rest of the Nation had been like thee, it would surely have been all in flames before now.

Be sincere and thorow in this humiliation of soul, and take heed of neglecting any such consideration as may help on the same. Review thy self, thy place, and Relations, and what in them was expected from thee, which thou failedst in performing, and accordingly lay it to heart, and judge and condemn thy self and behaviour. If in any place of Honour and service, thou hast not improved thy interest for the rooting out of sin, and advancement of Holiness, account thy negligence aggravated by the greatness of the Talents thou wast entrusted with. Wast thou a man of Wealth, Wit, Power, a Magistrate, a Minister, a Master of a Family? Take a strict account of, and humbly bewail thy unfaithfulness

fulness to thy several Trusts, and thy careleſness of thoſe duties which thy place did peculiarly engage thee to.

And do not think when thou haſt diſcovered, and confeſs'd ſin, that then thy work is over, as if by thy confeſſion thou hadſt purchaſed to thy ſelf a diſpenſation to continue in it; like many that think they ſerve God ſufficiently by going to Church, and ſaying their prayers, and in the mean while make not their ſerving him but a kind of indulgence for their ſinning againſt him.

But when thou haſt made this Progreſs, thy next work is order to the obtaining of a Pardon, is ſeriouſly and deliberately reſolve upon the putting away far from thee every known ſin, upon mortifying thy darleſt luſts, and upon a faithful performance of thoſe duties common to all Chriſtians, and thoſe thy Talents or Relation call for. If thou haſt been a debauch'd or covetous perſon, a careleſs miſpender of thy money or time, an Extortioner, or Oppreſſor, a cheating Landlord, or cheating Tradeſman, a Sabbath-breaker, and neglecter of Duty to God, publick or private, or haſt liv'd in any the like ſins, enter now into a ſolemn Covenant with God, that by the aſſiſtance of his Almighty Grace, thou wilt never more allow thy ſelf in ſuch a courſe of impiety. If thou haſt abuſed thy Riches, and laid them out only in making proviſions for thy own or others luſts; If thou thought'ſt thy Dignity above others, did diſpenſe thee a liberty of ſinning without controll, and accordingly haſt miſ-improv'd it; If thou haſt been unfaithful in the execution of Juſtice, with which thou waſt entruſted, neither looking after ſin to puniſh it, nor puniſhing it when it was revealed to thee, but haſt rather been a terror to good works, than to evil: If as a Miniſter, thou haſt been regardleſs of the ſouls of thoſe committed to thy over-ſight, only ſtriving to enrich thy ſelf, not better thy people, practiſing thoſe ſins thou haſt preach'd againſt;

Or,

Or, if as a Ruler of a Family, thou hast been negligent, not setting up the Worship of God in thy House, but gone from one day to another without so much as a serious Prayer, nor hast instructed thy Children or Servants in the fear of the Lord; whatsoever, in regard thy sinful and unfaithfulness is in this behalf, confess and lament the same, and resolve for the future to do thy utmost to discharge thy Duty, to answer and fill up thy several Relations.

And here again, let me anticipate this silly Objection before me hinted, what can my repentance do to the diverting of Judgements that flow in upon us like a deluge? For if all should use this, who is it must pacifie Gods wrath by their Reformation? But if thou for thy part wilt practice what I have here curiously directed, thou knowest not but others may do so also; and so if every one would set to this work, thy Cavil would be wholly silenced and answered. But again, thou wouldst gain more to some purpose for the whole body of the people to joyn in hearty humiliation and amendment of their wayes, and know, that is to the greatest benefit that would accrue to a Nation by such a general Repentance, thou shalt procure to to thy self by this personal performance of thy Duty, that is, either the Affliction it self shall be kept, or taken off here, or laid on in so much mercy, that thou thy self shalt, either here, or in another World, bless God for the same. And I hope this advantage is not inconsiderable, when on the other hand thou remembrest, how certainly thy impenitence will cause thy everlasting, as well as temporal ruine. And take notice from the Text, That God will render to every particular man according to his wayes; but this I have before said something to.

Oh that now there were in us all such Resolutions unfeignedly to search our hearts, and reform our lives, and

with

with our whole Souls turn to the Lord our God, from whom wee have revolted? What blessed effects should we finde of this Wise and Dutiful demeanour! Oh that I knew how to perswade poor Souls to this course, before their deadly enemy, who now doth all he can to harden and stupifie them, shall bee fully seiz'd of them, put all possibility of a delivery; when scorning at all our endeavours, and challenging us to do our best for the rescue of such undone Souls, who must bee consumed by him, by whom they would bee united. But if thou art so far perswaded of the reasonableness of this Duty, I have been pressing upon thee, that thou art desirous to know thy Self and Sins, wouldest gladly finde out, that thou mightest expell the Plague of thy own heart; that I may do something further to help thee in thy Self-examination, I shall briefly endeavour to discover what those sins in our Nation are, for which especially we are now plagued by the visible hand of God: And the Lord awaken us all seriously to lay to heart, and remove them far from us, that so God having accomplish't his own design upon us, may lay by his Rod, and shew us his wonted favour. And let me beseech thee, Reader, to accompany me with thy Conscience, and let thy eye still be turned off from the Book upon thy self, and if thou seest thy own action described, cry out, *Guilty, guilty I am the man!* and so proceed in thy Duty, as I have before Directed, and shall not again repeat, except on the By.

In the prosecution of this design, I shall say something,

1. Of those notorious crying sins, which are to be found amongst us, of which, I shall need to say the less, because they are so visible upon us, and so readily acknowledged to bee what they are, and because so many Books are written to shame and suppress them.

2.

2. I shall proceed to lay open some such abuses and corruptions among us, which are not only sinful in themselves, but also in part, secret causes of the former, which yet perhaps may not be apparent to, nor acknowledged as such by all.

And once again let me desire every Reader to place himself, as at the Bar of God and so to pass a true judgement upon himself, and not to quarrel with the Physician, instead of falling out with the Disease; nor be more averse from hearing the discoveries of the Plague of his own heart, than he would bee to hear his Physician tell the Symptomes of the Plague, to convince him he was struck with it, whil'st all this was but in order to his recovery. Whoever thou art that art guilty, 'tis thou hast wounded thy self; I would willingly shew thee thy Sores, that they might in time be healed; if thy resolution not to have them search't into, make them incurable, though I may never have thy thanks for the offer of my help, yet I know whom thou wilt accuse as the cause of thy Destruction, which I would fain have prevented, and shall do what I may in order thereto.

1. In the front of those Abominations, under the Effects whereof we groan, wee may well place *Adultery*, *Fornication, and Lasciviousness*, whether we consider the provoking Nature, or the commonness hereof amongst us. This is a sin we often finde attended with exemplary punishments in Scripture; for this together with their Idolatry, we read of a *Plague* inflicted upon the *Israelites*, *Numb.*25. whereof dyed 24000. For *Davids* commission of this but once, it was threatned to him, *That the Sword should never depart from his house*, 2 *Sam.*12.10. And in the New Testament especially, how frequent are the prohibitions, and how severe the threatnings denounc'd against it? *Whoremongers and Adulterers*, in a peculiar manner, *God will judge*. And for *these things sake*

especially, wee are told, *comes the wrath of God upon the Children of disobedience.* How strict is our Saviours Exposition of the seventh Commandement, making a lustful glance the breach of it? And upon the mention of that, immediately follows the threatning of the whole body being cast into Hell, without the cutting off the right hand, and plucking out the right eye; the subduing the deerest lusts, and renouncing the sweetest sins, *Mat.* 5.28,29,30. With what repetitions of the same do we finde it mentioned, where its spoken against, inculcated again and again, to take the deeper impression? And when the lusts of the flesh are named, usually this is reckoned for the greater part of them in various expressions, signifying much-what the same thing, *Colos.* 3. 5. *Mortifie therefore, &c. Fornication, Uncleanness, Inordinate Affections, Evil Concupiscence,* Ephe. 5.3,4. Gal. 5. 19. *Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these, Adultery, Fornication, Uncleanness, Lasciviousness.* This sin we finde much aggravated by the Apostle, 1 *Cor.* 6. 13,14. to the end; as that which in a particular manner defiles a man, and renders him indisposed for the indwellings of the Holy Spirit. This loathsome wickedness doth especially soften and brutifie men, and sinks them from God into the sensitive life, and stupifies the higher parts of the Soul, and renders them unqualified for a converse with that God, who commands all that will approach him, *To be Holy, as he is Holy.* And this is a sin which upon many accounts, breeds as much confusion and disorder in the world, as it doth in particular mens Souls: It must needs therefore incense the most high God, to see his creatures endued with Reason for the governance of themselves, to whom he hath prescribed Rules for their walking, to degenerate into such effeminate impotence, as to bee hurried away by their own lusts, to such beastial uncleanness.

But

But alas! How notoriously infamous is our Nation grown for filthineſs and lewdneſs! It cannot now bee charged on the Pope alone, That Publick Stews are erected within his Juriſdiction, yet here's this difference; Thoſe are (if Hiſtory and common Report ſpeak Truth) Licenc't: Ours are not demoliſh't. Nor yet perhaps are ours ſo publick, or certainly known, but yet too publick they are, to the diſgrace of our Nation, and Holy Profeſſion. Inſomuch that one would think *Venice* was looſt from its foundation, and floated into *England*. It is not the loathſomeneſs of that Diſeaſe, which in a juſt Judgement attends it, that will deter men from this more loathſome ſin: Yea, ſo common is it grown, that by many 'tis look't upon as a very light matter, no way ſo hainous as God and his Preachers would make it. And they are ready to cenſure his Laws as ſevere, for not allowing them the priviledges of Bruits; ſo ſtrangely doth frequency in ſin, wear out the ſenſe of it! And a ſenſual life doth even blinde the underſtanding, and bribe the Conſcience till at length with much ado, men almoſt perſwade themſelves, that they may do what they have often done, and are reſolv'd ſtill to perſiſt in. *Whoredome, Wine, and new Wine, take away the heart, Hoſ.*4.10, 11. Even in a Literal ſenſe, *the ſpirit of Whoredomes cauſe men to erre.* And can it ſeem ſtrange, if at length God make uſe of Arguments, which ſuch bruitiſh creatures themſelves are capable of, to reprove them, *That their filthineſe is highly provoking to his glorious Majeſty, who is of purer eyes, than to endure to behold the leaſt iniquity.* His word condemned this before, as plainly as it could ſpeak; but vile Wretches, whoſe Senſes are their Maſters, would not underſtand it; they acknowledged not his Commands, they either beleived not, or would not conſider his threatnings; his promiſes of an everlaſting glory, were too thin and ſpiritual for them to reliſh, or

be allured by. What tell yee them of Rivers of pleasures at Gods right hand? They must have their dirt to tumble and wallow in. Take those who will for them, they must have their Chambering and Wantonness, and lustful dalliances. Nothing must go for reason with them, which contradicts their sensual desires; and is it not just, they should then be dealt with suitable to their Natures? That since nothing else would do it, Sense and Feeling may at length assure them, their sweet and pleasant sins are a displeasure to God; and most pernicious to themselves: And if neither seeing the beginning of Gods wrath upon others, nor feeling it themselves will prevail with them, God hath judgements in store that shall extort from them, will they, or will they not, most passionate and hearty acknowledgements, that whilst they were satisfying their lusts, they were most studiously contriving their own ruine, and *treasuring up wrath for themselves against the day of wrath.* If neither Poverty, nor shame, Pox nor Plague, can bring them to such a confession, Hell shall bring them to this, and much more.

But as if we were not content with those ordinary sins of Adultery and Fornication, 'tis reported that we have amongst us, beside, the *effeminate abusers of themselves with mankinde also.* This in *Italy* had been no such monstrous thing; but can it bee accounted less in *England*? Both Heathen and Popish *Rome* indeed, hath still been infamous for this, amongst other abominations; and thence 'tis most probable, we have derived *Sodomy*, as well as *Popery.* And 'tis well, if amongst all other projects, for the promotion of *Holy Church*, this bee not one, to debauch our Gentry, the better to dispose them for the imbracing of that Religion, which can afford them Indulgences at so cheap a rate. Now let any man but seriously consider the Holiness of God, his infinite Purity and Justice, and withall reflect upon his Omni-

presence,

presence, his all-searching eye that is upon the most secret actions; think but how he hath been a Witness of all that Lewdness that hath been committed in all places, in the greatest privacies and retirements, not bars and bolts could keep him out, nor drawn curtains, nor the darkest night could hide impure sinners from his view; consider wee but these things, and shall wee wonder if for these wickednesses the Lord be wrath with us, and pour out the Vials of his fury upon us? How justly might God take up the complaint against us, which he did against *Israel*, *Jer.*5. 2,8. *When I have fed them to the full they then committed Adultery, and assembled themselves by Troops in the Harlots Houses: They were as fed Horses in the morning, every one neighed after his Neighbours Wife.* And what follows, *vers.* 9. *Shall I not visit for these things, saith the Lord? and shall not my soul be avenged on such a Nation as this?* And oh now, that all those whose Consciences condemn them for these things, would presently arise, and take shame to themselves, and do no more so wickedly, lest worse things yet befal them. And the good Lord awaken those that are in Authority, to greater vigilance and industry for the future, in searching after, punishing and suppressing this Impiety, wherewith we are so polluted, that the Visitation now upon us, which hath so much the same cause with that laid on the *Israelites*, *Num.*25. may also have the same speedy & effectual cure, which we may read, *Psal.*106. 29, 30. *Thus they provok't him to anger with their inventions, and the Plague brake in upon them. Then stood up* Phinehas, *and executed Judgement, and so the Plague was stayed.*

The two next sins I shall mention, may pass for Appendices to this first, as having been too apparent promoters of it; which yet if they were not, may upon other accounts be deservedly reckoned amongst the provoking sins of the Land.

2. The former, is the *Licentiousness of the Stage*, where wickedness; and amongst other sorts, Wantonness is more effectually taught, than it is decryed in the Pulpit. Let their favourers talk what they will of their advancing Virtue, and shaming Vice, I should put it amongst one of the wonders of the times, to hear of any man reform'd by a Play. If to hear oaths, be the way to make men leave them; if to hear the Sacred Name of God profaned, his Word jested with, Religion it self derided, be the way to make men devout; if to hear Lascivious Discourse, and see impudent persons and actions, be the way to get Modesty, then let us all flock to the Play-House. And next, from the same Reason, let Youth be brought up in a Brothel-house, to learn Chastity; at a Tavern, to avoid Drunkenness; at a Gaming-house, to keep them from Cursing and Swearing. I have heard but few count it any great wisdome in that Nation, where they were wont to make their Servants Drunk, to shew their Children the odiousnesse of it; and surely there was less charity in it, to make some commit wickedness, that they might prevent it in others. When Vice shall be represented, yea, and commendably too, 'tis very great odds but that they will soon turn Actors when they are gone a way, who were even now Spectators of it. What is to be learnt at the Play house, let the Conversations of men that plead for, and haunt them, evidence. And from the Lives to the Consciences of the greatest Admirers of a Play, do I appeal, Whether ever they got any real good from them, and whether they have not oft got evil. The precious time that is mis-spent either in seeing, or afterwards talking of them, is not to be look't on as a thing of nothing; however it bee slighted by those wretched Sots, that knowing neither God nor themselves have more time than they know well what to do with, and therefore are glad to run to their Plaies and Sports

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for nothing else but to help them away with it; and let not such complain, if a Plague at once ease them of all that trouble, and carry them into an Eternity, where they shall never more have one of those precious moments which here they were weary of, and knew not how to improve. And if they knew nothing they had to do here, but please themselves, God will cast them into a world, where hee will finde them employment enough, but of such a nature, that they shall wish a thousand and a thousand times over, that they had spent all their daies in the greatest diligence and strictness to have prevented it. Let the giddy careless ones of the world, cry as long as they will, what hurt is there in this, or the other Recreation or Merriment, that only wasts their time? If there was any hurt in the fire and brimstone that fell upon *Sodome*, that which caus'd it was no such harmlesse thing; and amongst the sins of the City, *abundance of idleness* is named for one, *Ezek.* 16. 49.

Again, were it nothing else but the vanity and frothiness of minde, and unfitness for all Religious Duties, which Playes naturally produce, I think this was enough to make all sober persons regard them as little better than Pest-houses. And had our Gallants lookt on them as such, and accordingly shun'd them, they might not have had occasion to avoid those which are more dreadful, but less hurtful. Would our wanton Youth, and idle Dames have kept out of these places of Infection, where folly and lightness tainted them both by their eyes and ears, there might have been no such Infected places, which they are now so careful to avoid. For my own part, I must needs say, That I took it for a dishonourable reflection upon our English Prelacy, which a modern Poet makes his Observation, in a Preface to a Book of Commedies, put forth in these late times, *That Bishops*

and Plays went down together. And sure, if they could have hindred it, 'tis as little for their Honor, that they have both been restor'd together. I can scarce (but that I should prevent my self) forbear crying out; *when Preachers mouths are stopt, and Players opened, what sad effects are like to follow!* Surely the Primitive Christians, whose moroseness in refusing to behold the Roman *Spectacula* (whatever difference there may be betwixt them, and our Stage-plays) was one great crime objected against them, would not have thought such lewd and immodest Shews agreeable with their profession. But what talk I of them, a company of sullen souls, much-what like the people we are wont to laugh at for Puritans? It is not my business now to argue, what a Play is in it self, or what it may possibly be refin'd to; but I speak of them with all those corruptions with which they are now attended. And I would hope the same policy, a little more improv'd, which hath shut up the Play-houses now, to prevent the spreading of the Infection, will keep them so, to hinder its return: Whoever may be displeased with this motion, I am very confident, God is not, and then I am indifferent who is.

3. The latter of the two sins, which I mention'd, as related to the first particular, is *Pride*; and amongst all the sorts of it, which might very well deserve our notice, and with which no doubt God is provoked, here I mean especially *Pride of Apparel*; a sin grown either so impudent, or so universal, that our Pulpits do of late daies seldome meddle with it. I am sometimes ready to think, Ministers are asham'd to concern themselves with such low and ridiculous things (though I wish they are not silent for fear of offending their fine hearers, which may chance to be of the best in the Parish.) But if people will be so ridiculous and vain, and manifest such childishness and folly, surely their Teachers must follow them,

them, and condiſcend to diſcover to them all their miſtakes, and the ſubtil ways of the Deceiver of Souls, who is very ready to play at any game for the ruine of poor creatures, and holds more in his ſlavery by this very vanity we are now inſiſting on, than is ordinarily thought: We may find the great Apoſtles not thinking it below them to give precepts in this matter, 1 *Pet.* 3. 3, 4, 5. *Whoſe adorning, let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, or wearing of gold, or putting on of apparel, &c.* So alſo 1 *Tim.* 2. 9, 10. *In like manner alſo, That women adorn themſelves in modeſt apparel, with ſhamefac'dneſs and ſobriety, not with broidered hair, or gold, or pearls, or coſtly array; but, which becometh women profeſſing godlineſs, with good works.* Which Commands how they have been violated, it concerns the guilty to lay to heart. As I would not be thought of their Opinion, who place their Religion ſo much in meats, drinks, or apparel, whether *Papiſts* in the former, or *Quakers* in the latter; ſo I am as far from thinking, that Religion extends not to theſe things; for though it be ſeated in the heart, it gives Laws to the outward man. I remember, it is an obſervation of a moſt Judicious and Learned Divine, That few of thoſe Errors or Sects that have roſe up amongſt us, but have call'd upon us, to have regard to ſome neglected truth or duty, as he inſtanceth in ſeveral. And to add one more, I think the *Quakers* are riſen up, keeping ſuch a ſtir about Ribbands, Cuffs, and Lace, and ſuch like things, to ſhame and condemn all, eſpecially the more ſtrict Profeſſors of Religion, for that very great liberty they have aſſum'd to themſelves in their bravery, gaudineſs, and changeableneſs of apparel. Had the Profeſſors of theſe latter times, made thoſe of the former (who were yet as careful of their hearts as any) their patterns in this matter, they had ſpoil'd the poor *Quaker* of half his Religion, and not

given

given him an occasion to bring up a Sect that should go in plain and modest cloathing. But wise are they who shun both extreame.

Doubtless, this pride in the outward man, is no such a slight matter as 'tis commonly made. See *Isa.* 3. 16. *Because the Daughters of Zion are haughty, and walk with stretcht-forth necks, and wanton eyes.*— *Therefore will the Lord smite with a scab, the crown of the head of the Daughters of Zion.* And have we not had multitude, such walking in our streets? Read on that Chap. from the 16. ver. to the end, and tell me then, whether God take not notice of, and is not displeas'd with that vanity, and curiosity in apparel. Is not this indeed to be proud of our shame, since cloathes themselves had not been us'd, but for that shame which sin introduc't? And I may well annex this to be the sin of wantonness, both as discovering and promoting it: For what's the design of all that art, cost and pains that persons bestow upon attiring themselves, but to appear handsome and well set out? And what's this for, but to court others eyes to be fixt on them? what are naked breasts, and painted, and spotted faces design'd for, but as trapans and snares for the wanton beholders? and the dress it self by the lascivious, is made but a more plausible kind of Pander. It may be worth the noting, that the word rendred effeminate, μαλακοὶ 1 *Cor.* 6. 9. is joyned with ἱμάτια, and signifies soft cloathing, *Mat.* 11. 8. which may intimate to us, that there is some relation betwixt such cloathing and effeminacy. And whereas by the Texts above-mentioned, it seems that women only were wont to be guilty of this folly; the delicate Youths of our time, will not suffer that Sex to ingross this sin, and shame to themselves, but are resolved to go sharers. Oh the intollerable expence of money and time; for the satisfaction of this base monstrous pride! How many naked backs might be cloathed

cloathed with half that cost, which is lavished to put a man in a fools Coat, or to hang about them such bables as may serve people to stare at? And let the guilty bethink themselves how to answer this their liberality upon their lusts, in the day of severe account, when all talents shall be reckoned for. By that time at the farthest, if they be not convinc't that persons of Honor and Estates, had been better distinguish'd by their examples of charitableness, than by gaudy garments, or rich Jewels, let me pass for a false Prophet. Though I speak not this of those Robes and Ornaments of the Magistrate, which are necessary for distinction sake, and to acquire greater Reverence to his place and person. But let all those who are at so much charge in their Attire, to let the world know they are Some-body, remember this, *That God entrusted them not with Estates for them thus to make shew of, but to use for his Service.* And I think any body will say, that he's an unfaithful Steward with a witness, who when his Lord hath given him money to lay out in necessary uses, shall throw it about streets, to let people know what store of money he hath the keeping of: Thou who canst condemn such an one, see thou do nothing like him. Whoever thou art that hast been guilty of this fault, surely thou wilt acknowledge this is a day that calls for the laying aside of thy braveries and ornaments, and rather to cover thy self with Sackcloth and Ashes. But if yet thy pride will not suffer thee to part with them, bethink thy self what thy naked soul shall wear in that place whither God hath expressly threatned to turn the proud. *Dives* there must not have his Silk and fine Linnen, but instead of them, the purple flames are his unchangeable cloathing.

Is it any wonder then, if as the *Israelites* were plagued for worshipping the Idol which was made of their Ear-

Ear-rings and Jewels, *Exod.* 32. 3. 35. We meet with the same punishment for a sin not much different, even for making such Toyes themselves our Idols? Strange judgements may well follow strange apparel; yea, such that wear it, God hath plainly threatned, *Zeph.* 1. 8. And what strange apparel both for men and women have the Devil, Pride, and *France* help't us to? And they who caught this sin one of another, pleading Fashion for their justification, are they not justly afflicted with a disease that is contagious too? The Spots which Pride and wantonness, those plagues of the heart, sent into the face before, are they not fitly punisht with spots of another Hue! Is it not exceeding just, that they who were so fat faln in love with their comely carkasses, that they were wholly devoted to deck and trim them; should have such loathsome botches, and noisome biles, and risings upon them, as might convince them how little better than Carrion is that flesh they so much pamper and adorn? And let them now think what pleasure or ease is to be had from putting on their splendid finest array, when the plague sores shall be running upon them; even much what the same that *Herod* had from his Royal Apparel, when he was eaten up of worms, *Acts* 12. 21. 23. And if in such a case they would have little mind to stand tricking and trimming them, let them know that the Ulcers and sores of their polluted souls, and proud hearts, call for as speedy, and earnest regard, and deep humiliation; and were these once cured, such vanities would be thrown aside. The Lord grant all those who survive, may take warning in time, before their bodies are humbled to the dust, and their souls to hell, for their daring, impudent pride.

4. Another heinous sin which hath over-spread our Land, is *Swinish Drunkenness and Gluttony*: This also may

may well be joyned with those before mentioned, as being the ground and incentive of all other lewdness and wickedness. But alas! how hath the commonness of this vice, and mens custome in it, taken away those odious apprehensions which Scripture helps us to, and all sober men have of it? Oh! how are our Taverns and Ale-houses, in all parts of the Kingdome frequented? how doth our whole Nation seem even ready to reel into its own ruines, being seized with the Vertigo of an Epidemical drunkenness? how gentile, and fashionable a thing is it now grown, for men to be drunk, in civility to the company they are engaged in? how many Tricks have they devised for the maintaining of this sin? Notwithstanding the most expres Injunctions and Proclamations to the contrary; Prophane Custome hath so overswayed, that drinking of Healths must be the Test of Mens Loyalty; and of their respect to those great Ones, to whom the Beginner shall consecrate his Bowl; as if a disorderliness, which scarce any Beast will be guilty of, must shew good manners; and no man could be a good Subject to his King, which dare not rebel against his God. Those that dare, are valiant men indeed; but such, as when it comes to tryal, will do little more for their Prince, than they do for their Maker. So general is this practise of excessive drinking grown, that both the Gallant and the Clown, Rich and Poor, Young and Old, yea, women as well as men, City and Country, are sadly infected with the same. In too many places, he's scarce accounted a good House-keeper, that lets his Neighbours go out of his house sober. How can men entertain their friends, or renew their Acquaintance, or drive any bargain, without breaking themselves to some Tipling-house? Yea, how frequently are drinking-matches appointed, for no other purpose, but to pour down their liquor? What multitudes are there, *who rise up to drink strong*

strong drink, who tarry at night till wine inflame them? Ye to such an height of wickedness are we grown, that as there were some excellency in sinning, men strive for the Mastery in it; and to be able to Drink down others, go for a very manly faculty. Such Enemies have we got to the Cross of Christ; *whose god is their belly, whose glory is their shame.*

And is there not the same Reason, that our Crown of Pride, and the Drunkards of *England* should be trodden down, as well as of *Ephraim? Isa.* 28. 3. Is it not just that they whose Intemperance hath often deprived them of their Reason, should bee taken with a Distemper that may strip them of the use of it? That in those very streets where men have staggered and fallen down Dead-drunk, they should there fall down stark-dead?

The like might bee said of Gluttony, and Luxurious Feastings, a sin more confin'd to the greater Sort, who can make sufficient provisions for the flesh to fulfil the Lusts thereof; abundantly confirming what the wise man hath told us, *That the Prosperity of Fools destroy them.* And what a wiser than he hath expressly affirmed, though sure believ'd but by very few, *That Rich men do difficultly enter into the Kingdome of Heaven.* How much money is expended but once to furnish the Tables of these Glutton-nous Epicures? How do they sacrifice Gods creatures meerly to their Lusts, eating only for pleasure, and to keep themselves alive from one Meal to another, without thinking of that service they owe to God for all. *They have lived in pleasure, and been wanton, nourishing their hearts as in a day of slaughter,* as St. *James* speaks, *Chap.* 5. 5. What hath been the life of too many of our Gentry, but to eat, and drink, and sleep, and rise up to play? Here's the improvement of the many special Engagements God hath laid on them to honour him, that they of all will do least to his Honour. What an exact De-

scription

ripcion may wee read of many of them, *Amos 6. 3, 4, 6. Ye that put away far the evil day, and cause the seat of violence to come near: That lye upon the beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches, and eat the Lambs out of the flock, and the Calves out of the midst of the stall: That chaunt to the sound of the Viol, and invent to themselves instruments of musick, like David: That drink Wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief ointments: but they are not grieved for the afflictions of* Joseph. And there read on, you may finde their doom; *If men will bid their Souls take their ease, eat, drink, and be merry, well may they expect quickly to hear, Your Souls shall bee taken from you.* And when they are thus provoking God to anger, with their eating and drinking; what wonder if *his Wrath fall upon them, whil'st the meat is in their mouths?* If they so far forget their own Natures, and the use of his Creatures, as wholly to bee devoted to the satisfaction of their raging sensual desires, which they ought chiefly to have denied; and if like unprofitable burdens of the Earth, they fed themselves only that they might live longer to taste the pleasures of their delicious meats and drinks; how just is it, that when like Swine they are fatted, they should then be brought to the slaughter?

5. As the next provoking Sin which is rife amongst us, I shall reckon *Swearing, Cursing, and Profaning the most holy Name of the dreadful God.* A sin less excusable than Epicurism, because I know no Sense gratified with it: but though it be less Bestial, yet is it more Diabolical. Oh the horrid Oaths that have been daily belched out by the black-mouth'd Sons of *Belial!* Who almost could walk the streets of the City without stopping his ears? Or else hee was like to hear the name of God abused; the Life, the Blood, the Wounds of our dear and precious Lord tost to and fro, by the mouths of wretched Swearers! Who, that had heard all the Oaths and Curses that were

were vented but in one day, in this one City of *Lond*
would not have admired, that their tongues, who wer
thus set on fire on hell, did not set our whole Nation in
flame! Oh well is it for us that our God, who is mer
cy it self, rules in the world? How quickly would al
created patience, though meeting in one person, be
quite tired out, and worn away? These hellish exhalation
streaming forth from the hearts and mouths of corrupte
men, whereby they have assaulted even Heaven it self,
might justly have been kindled by the wrath of God, an
have been returned upon our heads in showres of fire an
brimstone. And if the polluted breath of these kind o
wretches, have infected the very Air we breathe in, 'ti
not to be thought strange in the least. Could those Vol
lies of blasphemies which have been discharged again
the glorious Majesty, do any other than turn to a blac
Cloud, which should light heavily upon us? Some thin
it impossible for the Soul of man so far to sink into th
devilish nature, as to sin meerly to sin, without a re
gard to some carnal interest: but if any instance will e
vidence it, I think 'tis Swearing and Cursing! 'Tis pos
sible I know (though this is far from excusing it) for pas
sion to transport men to an oath; and sometimes a de
fire to be believed, sometimes an ignorance that they d
amiss, may betray them into it, but for men to interlar
their ordinary discourse with full-mouth'd Oaths, pride
ing themselves therein, as if Gentile and Graceful, wha
excuse can be invented for such horrible practises? nay
when men shall set themselves purposely to swear, an
devise new oaths that shall be *all-a-mode*, what possible
pretence have they for this? And hither may I refe
those strange, unheard-of prodigies of prophaness, wicked
nesses too transcendental to be rank'd under any ordina
ry Tropick; Such as killing men in a *bravado*, drinkin
healths of their own blood; yea, healthing it to the De
vi

vil himself? For such I know not what to call them, as these we are reported to have had amongst us, nay, (can't thou imagine it Reader?) far worse than these: which let those mention who are Masters enough of our Language, to render them in fit terms, for I profess, I cannot. So unwilling are the daring fellows of our dayes to go to hell in the old way? It cannot consist with the greatness of their Spirits, to be wicked at those low rates, that their silly Ancestors were. In all they do, they would be taken notice of, and appear above the vulgar; and would proclaim to all men, that they are none of those melancholly, weak-brain'd, or mean-spirited men, who are to aw'd with the apprehensions of a God, that they dare not sin freely and boldly. No, but they have so far conquer'd those prejudices they had conceived of Virtue and Vice, sin and shame, that they dare in the open Sun commit those sins, which Cowards run into the dark for. They are not asham'd to own themselves the Devils Vassals, but dance in his Fetters, whilst all men hear their rackling. What other design can these swaggering sinners have in such a carriage, but audaciously to affront the great Majesty of Heaven and Earth, in the highest manner they are capable? Ah besotted wretches! let me bespeak you in the language of the Prophet, *Do you know against whom you shoot out the lip, and draw out the tongue?* What could your wit find no other way to vent it self; nor your malice any other object? Had you no cheaper way to undo your selves? were you afraid lest you should have miss'd of hell? what? did you indeed mean by your blasphemies to dare God to his face? Would you force him to give a convincing evidence of his Being? If so, I hope you are satisfied by this time; if not, you shall be shortly. Was you resolv'd to try how far his patience would extend? Did you fear he was so merciful, that you should never feel

his wrath? Or were you in such haste to banish your everlasting Companions, the Devils and the Damned, that you thought your Judgements lingred, and Damnation slumbred, and would therefore do your best to hasten it? Or were you so fully bent on the satisfaction of your lusts, that you were resolv'd to pursue them even to the burning lake; and therefore thought you had e'en as good go to hell for something, and would make what your selves as good a bargain as you could, and do all the sin you lay before-hand, to revenge your selves on the God, who will there treat you so severely? or were you now betimes inuring your selves to the language of hell, that you might not be to learn when you should be thrown thither? These are strange suppositions the Reader may think, but not so strange as the sins I am speaking of, and for which I can scarce assign other reasons than such as these. And shall we wonder, when such Rebels are risen up against the Lord, if he grow jealous for his great Name, and arise, and vindicate his Glory and power, from the contemptuous affronts of insolent mortals? Moreover, how many times have people in their execrations, wishes, that the Pot and the Plague might take themselves, their children, servants or cattel? And can they find faults if at length, their desires are granted? yea, how many roaring Ruffians have we got, who, as if they were already entred into the familiarity of Devils, make nothing of it to curse themselves to the pit of hell in their common discourse; who can scarce speak a sentence without their *Damme's* and *Sirrees*? whose tongues, were they pluckt out by the roots, it was a punishment no way suited to the heinousness of their crime; but let them, if they think fit, sin a while longer in their contempt of God and his threatnings, and their resolute disobedience to his holy Laws, and if nothing else will serve their turn, they shall at

soon ecchoe sorrow, find all their accursed prayers and complaints. The Devil, whom they have so often wisht to fetch them, shall very shortly have that Commission which he eagerly waits for, and then let them say whether the dreadful God be to be jested with, or abus'd. And then at length shall they hear that terrible question thundered against them, *Have you provoked me, saith the Lord? Have you not provoked your selves unto confusion of your own faces?*

6. Amongst the rest of our commonness, we may account *Covetousness*, together with all the discoveries, effects and bradches of it; Such as *Oppression, Extortion, Bribery, Insolence, either in Judgement, or mutual traffique, over-reaching each other, Uncharitableness, and grinding the faces of the poor.* All put all these together, as having some relation to each other, and being all neglects of duty betwixt man and man. If Idolatry so often brought the Plague, or other sufferings upon the *Israelites*, why may not Covetousness, which is Idolatry, by the same reason bring it upon us? Is it not as displeasing to God, to have men adore an heap of gold and silver, or their houses and Lands, as an Image of Gold made up into humane shape? And is it not as great a sin, for the heart to run a whoring after these things, as to bow the body to an Idol? And how are men almost every where set with all their might and main to thrive, and rise in the world, to lade themselves with thick clay, and here to lay up their Treasures? Was it not time for us then to be told, and told to the quick, what we were doing? That we were not yet in Hell, and must not therefore think of setling here? Single deaths of men, when there died now one, then another, had but little effect on us, to make us sensible of our own mortality, and therefore multitudes are swept away before our eyes, to see if that will have any

more influence upon us. With what unwearied, and uninterrupted pains and diligence did the most drudge about their earthly affairs, from morning to night, weeks end to weeks end, without any serious regard to the business they came into the world for? but were so deeply fain in love with present things, that they dreamps not of a removal? and withal were so plunged over head and ears in their cares and businesses, that they could not find a time for any serious consideration of the matters of their souls? how just is it then that God should take them off by his hand, if they know not how to disingage themselves? and snatch them away from those estates which they knew no better how to improve, but were even melting themselves in them, as their durable possessions.

And I hope all who are engag'd in such affairs, will call themselves to a strict account, whether there have been no such unjust sentences pronounc'd either in condemning the Innocent, or acquitting the Guilty, that may have provok'd the just God to anger against us.

And let all merciless rich men, cruel Extortioners, oppressive Landlords, lay to heart their unmercifulness, rigor or injustice to the poor, to the fatherless and widow, whose cries may have reacht the ears of the Lord of Sabbath, *Jam.* 5. 4. and caus'd him to rise and plead their cause, by sending his judgments upon an hard-hearted generation. And doubtless that great want of Charity, and Christian compassion which ought to be in us, towards our Brethren, in their necessities and miseries, may very justly have hardned God himself against us, and caus'd him to be deaf to our cries and prayers. How many have had their money and precious things which they had hoarded, left to strangers, or rifled by theevish hands, which they might in their life time so well have imploy'd for Gods honor, and their own good? But alas, amongst the many

that

that profeſs the faith, how few are there who will take a promiſe from God as good ſecurity? And amongſt ſo many that ſay they love God, how few have manifeſted it by their love to their Brother? And hath the matter been mended, ſince we have been under this ſore Viſitation? nay rather, hath it not been worſe? O how have men ſhut up their bowels againſt their poor, neceſſitous, viſited Brethren? and ſuffered ('tis ſadly to be feared) thouſands to ſtarve for want of needful ſupplies, whilſt they have had enough for their luſts, and to ſpare; and need not (which yet in ſuch a day eſpecially is our duty) have pincht their own back or belly to have afforded them relief. And this cruelty have men been guilty of, whilſt many of them had reaſon every day to expect their own death; but they have ſeem'd reſolv'd to hold, and graſp all as long as poſſibly they can, and to cleave cloſer, if they knew how, to their dear Mammon, of which ſhortly they muſt take their ſad and laſt farewel. Oh! who but Infidels would not have ſent their treaſures before them thither, where they expect ſhortly to be themſelves tranſlated! But the ſin I chiefly intended under this head is, the common diſhoneſty in buying and ſelling; mens defrauding and over-reaching each other; a practiſe, which I fear, *London* hath been more guilty of, than *Corinth*, which yet was charg'd with it, 1 *Cor.* 6. 8. And it concerns Citizens and Tradeſmen eſpecially, to enquire into themſelves upon this account, as being moſt expos'd to temptations to it. Thou who yet ſurviveſt, examine thy heart, look back on thy former courſe of life, in thy following the world. Does not thy conſcience accuſe thee for having grown rich by lying, cheating, and deceitful wayes? Hath not thy conſcience many times flown in thy face, for thy notorious falſhoods, and crafty projects, and unlawful devices, to put off thy wares, and enrich thy ſelf? Alas, men are ready to plead a kind of neceſſity for

their sins, and say, If they should always live upright, plain, and true, they should never know how to live. Is not the world then come to a brave pass? what a manner of course is it with Tradesmen to tell untruths, lies to every Customer almost, and never make mention of them, so they but help off their Commodities? They can go their wayes, and wipe their mouths, and there's an end; but hold, God will not put it up so. So they can now get a pound, or a shilling, how little do they regard the time of reckoning for all again? They know not how to keep up such serious thoughts in the midst of the noise and bustle in buying and selling. But if they can, God will take them off their hot trading, and give them leisure enough to consider what they have been doing. And hath he not done thus? 'Tis well for those who improve their breathing space here, that they have not this work to do in the other world. All that men could think of, was that money was to be got, which way it might not so much. And well had it been for them, if God had made no more manner of it; but believe it, he hath taken a strict notice of all thy wayes, and records them with greater exactness, than thou wast wont to thy Debts in thy Shop book. See thy sin described and threatned, *Mic.* 6. 10, 11, 12, 13. After he had spoken the Lords Voice crying to the City by his Rod, *verse* 9. then follows, *Are there yet the treasures of wickedness in the house of the wicked, and the scant measure, which is abominable? shall I count them pure with the wicked balances, and with the bag of deceitful weights? For the rich men thereof are full of violence, and the inhabitants have spoken lies, and their tongue is deceitful in their mouth. Therefore also will I make thee sick in smiting thee, in making thee desolate because of thy sin.* Oh how many are there that will be Religious, as far as coming to Church, and being devout there, and making some outside profession, comes to, &

ons in their dealings are slack enough, and will be dishonest for a small gain? In the Church, and perhaps a little in their Closets, they can afford to do that they call serving of God, but in their shops nothing at all. Oh by that time all's reckoned for, when the money's gone, but the sin in getting it must be answered for, how will men wish, and wish again they had been clear from this guilt, though they had been the meanest Beggars in the Land! Now how just is it men should be snatch'd from those Estates, to which they never had a true Title? And indeed they cannot drive a Trade without so great miscarriages, is it not time that their houses and shops should be shut up?

7. The next Sin we shall take notice of, is *Murder*; which surely if any, hath a crying voice. *Abels* blood soon reach'd Heaven with its cry for vengeance. And how many Murders have we daily heard of, committed amongst us? How common is it grown for the Gallants of our Times, to Sacrifice one anothers Lives to their Lusts, to their Passion, or their Pride? And I wish that the Impunity of some, may not have incouraged others. Is it not time then for God to take the Sword into his own hand, and let his audacious Creatures know, That the Lives they are so prodigal of, are his, and at his disposure? And if they value them at no higher rates, they have no reason to complain if they are taken away, since they knew no better what to do with them. If indeed they are so weary of the World, they shall say no longer it.

And here especially, let mee bring to remembrance that Heathenish practice of Duelling; which of late is grown so much in fashion, that none must pass for a *Gentleman*, but he who dare Murder his Brother: and to be an *Hector*, is more commendable than a *Christian*. The Example and Precepts of that pattern, and Master

of Mechanicks, the holy Jesus, the very meanness of those
is little less than ridiculous to our brave Pellants. All
those Precepts seem suited to the mean state of Christi-
anity, when poor Fishermen and Tent-makers were the
Preachers, and Tradesmen like them, were for the mo
part Receivers only; but we must have them calculated
again for those of a more elevated Meridian, viz. fo
our Gentry, who had the luck to be born of Parents tha
were call'd Christian. The Jesuits must fit them wi
Rules that shall allow for their birth and breeding: fo
surely Christ never meant to have Gentlemen his Disci
ples, when he tyed them up to such strict commands, no
practicable by men of their blood and spirits. Religio
now adaies is thought to emasculate men, and render
them tame and cowardly. Basely to submit themselves t
their own unruly passions, with these is Courage: To b
Bears and Tygers, is accounted Gemite and Manly.
These are the Lordly Creatures that are so tender of the
Honours, that they will rather violate the Laws of th
great God, than the least punctilio of it. To humou
or win a Fantastical Mistris (its well they are not t
hearing when I call her so) they durst venture upon th
Wrath of their Maker. For the Wall, or the Way, for
wry Word, or a Straw, they durst venture their Necks t
the Halter, and their Souls to the Devil. Are not these
the true Sons of Valour? Such that even in cold blood
and upon sober deliberation, dare damn themselves. An
why? because forsooth they are afraid of being calle
Cowards, and abused by every body else, should the
have past by one injury. They could tell what this wa
but what the Hell they leapt into was, they knew not t
they found themselves there; and by that time, poo
wretches, how was their courage cool'd? And now a
length, you valiant Fighters, wonder not if God himsel
be stept into the Field against you. What? do you thin

you

you have met with your match yet? Nay, but he hath not yet appeared with all his strength. He hath only sent one of his Warriers, Death sitting upon the Pale-horse; but see what a terrible Second there is, Hell follow'd after him, *Rev.* 6. 8. But come try your Manhood upon this first. The hour he appoints, is when he pleaseth; the Weapon hee now chiefly fights with, is the *Plague*, take you what you will; the place is *London*. What Cowards do you turn your backs now? Are you afraid to dye, and yet are not afraid to be damn'd? What will you laugh at Hell, and now quake at Death, and fly from it? But think not your heels can secure you, nor any place you can fly to, sooner or later be sure he'l finde you out. What did you challenge God to the Combat, and now do you run for't? Can you deny it? What else meane all your open, impudent wickednes, but to bid God do his worst? For to sin you were resolved, let him right himself how he could. God threw down his Gauntlet, when he said, *The soul that sins shall dye.* You took it up, when you rush't upon those sins. What, you miserable Caitiffs, you Children of the Devil, who is a Murderer, must you stand upon your terms, and command observance from your Company, and will draw at the least Affront, and shall God be careles of his Honour? Was it not present death for a man to throw a glass of Liquour in your face? And have you done less against God one day after another, by pouring down your superfluous glasses? Did the Lye deserve the stab, and shall you go Scot-free, who have so often given the Lye to God himself, speaking to you by his Word and Ministers, his Spirit and your own Consciences? Nay, what you count the most unsufferable Reproach, have you not bin ready to interpret Gods patience for Cowardize? Well, you are wont to call your selves Gentlemen: Know then, That for these, and a multitude of such Affronts, God demands satisfaction, and have it he will one way or other.

Your

Your speedy Repentance, and Believing recourse to the blood that speaks better things than that of murder. And may appease him; otherwise, when he makes Inquisition for blood, he takes the soul of you by the Throat and you to the Torment; and your sins shall accuse you, till you have paid the utmost Farthing.

8. Another very heinous Sin amongst us, is the Profanation of the Lords Day, and neglect of the Worship of God. How many are idling away their time at home, or ruining it worse, sinning it away in Tipling-Houses, while they should be attending the Publick Service of God? Or if they afford their bodily presence there for an hour or two, how soon after do they betake themselves to their pleasures, as if the rest of the day were their own? Or as if when they had prayed to God, to keep them that day without sin, they might boldly commit it? As if when they had beg'd of God to teach them to keep it (amongst the rest) the Fourth Commandment, they might then take Liberty to break it? And by their after practice, one would judge their prayer had been, *Lord have mercy upon us, and give us leave to break this thy Law.* Some go to their Drunken Companions; some to their Sports; others to walk idly in the streets or fields; and the most to their common, vain, and worldly Discourse. To any thing, rather than to private Meditation, or Family-repetition of what they have heard. How far are men from spending this day, as becomes those who have Immortal Souls to care for, and can spare but little time on week-dayes for such Employments! Oh how exceeding few are there that are willing rightly to inform themselves of the nature, use and end of this day, and accordingly to improve it? As it is a day set apart to commemorate, not only the work of Creation, but chiefly of Redemption by Christ our Lord, and especially his Resurrection, that being to him as a kinde of rest from

his

his Labours: And moreover, as it may be to us a Type and Resemblance of the Eternal Sabbatism we shall enjoy in the Heavens, when we shall rest from all sinful, troublesome, and bodily works, and be wholly imploy'd in the admiration, and praise of that Divine Love, which contriv'd and wrought our Redemption and Salvation. To have leave thus to spend a day with and for God, would be sufficient to engage holy and ingenious souls, with all alacrity and thankfulness to imbrace the opportunity. Such would be asham'd to stand reasoning and enquiring whether they might not halve it with God, and rob him and themselves of a good part. What a strange tedious thing is it for poor creatures that know not God, nor their own necessities, to be obliged to consecrate one day in seven to spiritual services, for which, awakened and experienc'd souls think their whole life-time little enough? How many have we had crying, like those, Amos 8. 5. *When will the New Moon be gone, and the Sabbath over?* That they might again to their pleasures, or imployments: Nay, our people have been in more haste than so, they could not stay till the Sabbath was over, but must to their bargaining, their buying and selling. How frequent is this with many Shop-keepers in the City, when no necessity requires it? Well, if indeed you are so eagerly bent on your business, that you will not keep a Sabbath which God commands you, he'll force you to another kind of Sabbath than this, which you shall have more reason to cry out, *When will it be over?* You shall be made to rest from your works longer than this comes to, if you cannot afford God that small space of time he affords you: And you that were wont to be so weary of the Prayer and Sermon, and shift postures, first up, and then down, peeping at the Glass, or your Watch: Is it not equal that you should be held with those pains which shall make you weary for somewhat? When you shall

turn

turn from side to side, but get no ease, and count all the tedious hours of the Night, expecting every moment to sink into that woful state, where are no more dayes, or nights, or hours; where you shall never have a moment rest through a whole Eternity! And then say whether the service of God or the sufferings you feel from God, be the more tedious. If wicked Wretches thus loosely encroach upon the Lords own Day, may we not well fear lest God should depopulate our Land, that so at length may *enjoy its Sabbaths*? And is it not just they should be seized with a Disease, which admits not of a Minister to visit them, who in the time of life and health did so little care for their Minister? How many who have been shut up from all Converse with men, were wont formerly to excommunicate themselves from the Publick Congregation? And if they would not stir over their Threshold to the Church, 'tis just they should not stir out at all. And may we not see many doors praying now, whose Owners were not before wont to pray either in Publick, or with their Families on the Lords day, or any other time? Nay perhaps might be deriders of all serious Praying, and only use to take Gods Name in vain with their Formalists. Is it not just then, that those who were utterly unacquainted with, and it may be jeer'd at, praying by the Spirit, should be caught by the feeling of their flesh, to groan out an hearty *Lord have mercy upon us.*

9. Another, very common Sin, somewhat related to the former, is *the contempt and abuse of the Ordinances of Christ, especially the Lords Supper; whilest so many partake of the Table of the Lord, and in some sense of the Table of Devils; which, what is it but to provoke the Lord to jealousie, as if we were stronger than he?* 1 *Cor.* 10, 21, 22. Many there are indeed, whose Hypocrisie and Treachery is onely known to God, and though the Minister cannot, yet the Lord he will finde out. To vow obedience to God, while

we

we intend and perform nothing less, this is such a wicked deceit, so solemnly to mock him, as he will not bear at his creatures hands. And how many thousands are guilty of such falshood and perjury? For the breach of these oaths be sure the Land mourns. When each member of the Church thus covenants to reform himself, and yet still continues in his wickedness. How is the receiving the Sacrament made a meer matter of course? And if it be remembred for a day it's well, but the engagement once made is presently forgot. But believe it, God will not forget it so. How many have we, that are celebrating the remembrance of Christs death to day, who are crucifying him again to morrow? And such as these, I chiefly intend, who whilst they customarily renew their obligations, to live to the honour of their Lord, do what they list to put themselves an open shame. And where is the place where difference is put betwixt the precious and the vile, and any scruple made of casting Pearls before Swine, and Childrens Bread to Dogs? Whose-ever fault this is, that it is a fault, and a very heinous one too, can hardly be denied by any that use to read, what Qualifications Scripture requires of all that are admitted, not only to some more solemn Ordinances, but into Church-Communion. If covetous persons, Drunkards, Swearers, Whoremongers, and all disorderly Walkers are to be noted, withdrawn from, and not to be eaten with (take the word in what sense you will) let the most impartial, charitable person judge, what vast and sad difference there is betwixt the precept, and our practice. *Si hoc sit Evangelium, non sumus Evangelici.* Where are they that *walk after this Rule?* And 'tis not likely that this very sin which brought sickness and death upon the *Corinthians*, should have lost its provoking nature by the tract of time, or any difference of circumstances betwixt us and them. It cannot surely be thought

thought that the commanders of this miscarriage,
yet the difficulty and seeming impossibility which
are apt to prevent or having it remedied, should re
it lets displeasing to that holy God, who is so jealou
powers Sanctuary. If Moses was smitten for this
bold officiousness in laying the correcting rod, and
age of the Israelites for their curiosity in prying
it how shall they be able to stand before the Lord in
day of his vengeance, who have so prophan'd his holy
ordinances? I never sometimes restrain men from
thing a crime that is universal, but believe its
no place in God. Yea, to his mercy we owe it, that
our punishment is not as extensive as our guilt. But
ly this his Decree of destruction with which he
away multitudes, clearly speaks his self-sent to
general sin, and I know none more than this we
upon. And it is not mere laziness, or carnal int
their hearts to displease either the Vulgar, or
One, by whom they live, that shall here, or in the
of their appearance before the great Law-giver
Judge, excuse their disobedience to his so expres
peremptory Injunction. To tell him then, that the
minds were inconsistent with their ease, or the favo
men, which is the voice of their present neglig
will hardly excuse them who have so often told o
that no man can be Christs Disciple (much less
Minister) without very great measures of Self-denia
ny of those, whom they now please by their cowar
and compliance, will then bear them out, they are
enough; but if that is not to be expected, they ha
think themselves in time, how to give a confor
account of their Stewardship. Though private men
performing their duty, may not justly pretend the Pu
negligence to justifie a Separation; yet how far
assuming a power to themselves, if they execute it
upon

…ill so far subject what shall be said to dispute those things, which we alledge shall Heleus shew to such whom they have good reason to think unworthy, or beholden shew to be concerned to take consider what is worthy of himself, in any behalf some prudence or other, to … the blemish from him, as that he was never such … blished nor suspended; but all these evasions will be … gross to pass for current with a just Judge: I hope … shall not have cause to bewail the want of; and … spiritual discipline amongst us, as guilty as the world … grown. By whom, with what endeavours and … ged, in matters both so much of old, and … ing; that the plain and indispensable Laws of Christ … be executed; that those very Constitutions which … fundamental to such a society as Christ hath appointed … his Church to be, may not be violated; that there … be discerned some difference betwixt the Church … the world, besides what a bare Opinion, or verbal … fession makes; that only the credible profession and … covery of that faith and holiness, which makes a man … Member of Christ, may serve for his being accepted … a Member of the Church. And I may very safely say, *that all they who have promised to God they would search out the … cause of such like corruptions in this Church wherein they … do indispensably oblig'd to perform it, since that is also one … of those which was included in their Baptismal Covenant.* What … ever variety of apprehensions there may be as to this … nce of Discipline, yet methinks so much as is judged … awful and necessary, by those who have power enough … their hands, should not be neglected: but it would … y well deserve their care, to see their own Laws put … execution.

10. And now wee speak of the Execution of Laws, we … y very well mention it as a most sad and shameful, … d very provoking sin, that after there is so much pro-

vision

vision made for the restraint and punishment of Vi
by many good and wholesome Laws, there should be
more fruit of them seen, for want of their being execu
How rare is it now adayes to hear of a man punish'd
Drunkenness, Swearing, Sabbath-breaking? And is it
ny other prophaneness, roysterie, and the like imm
ties abound, whilst the multitude that are most ruled
present things that reach their flesh, find no hurt co
of their profane and licentious courses? And if m
neglect their duty, can it be expected but that G
should take the Sword of Justice into his own han
and punish the rebellious? If it be demanded, what c
be done more than to enact Laws, and appoint men
put them in force, and by a solemn Oath engage th
thereunto? It may not appear presumption, I wo
answer, that it is also of as great consequence to see
Execution of Laws committed to them, who give p
bable grounds to believe, that they will be faithful
their trust. Cranmers Sword in a Cowards or Chil
hand, is like to do no great service. The truth of it
the most Conscientious look upon the charge as
weighty, that they dare scarce undertake it; much l
do they ambitiously seek after it; and if they shou
'tis a question whether their less deserving Competi
would not make a greater interest, and prevent th
But were all who are concerned so vigilant as th
should be, no doubt but that there might be a very gr
redress of this mischief. Was there a diligent inspec
to discover, and a willingness to imbrace them, th
might be found many, who notwithstanding the gr
discouragements they might meet with, would for
Honor of God, and service of their Country, eng
themselves in this burdensome but honourable Employ
ments. But can they be zealous for God, and for t
session to his Laws, who will not themselves be m
conformable thereby

thereby? But be it from me to speak evil of the Rulers of the people. I know it is the duty of all to do what they can to preserve to their persons that honour, which may contribute to the successful discharge of their Functions. And therefore it is no way fit to charge them with Crimes upon suspition, or bare report; nor to reprove them for secret sins publickly, nor to do it in that manner that may procure them contempt from the people. But if the miscarriages of men in Authority are notorious, that 'tis in vain to endeavour to conceal them; and when the offenders are such, and so many, that there is no way to deal with them, but by an open publishing of their reprehension, and consequently of the faults they are reprov'd for; it cannot in this case be justly censured for irreverence or undutifulness, to mind them modestly of their duty, and their neglects of it: especially whilst the discourse is general, meddling with no man's person, nor reflecting on any but the Guilty. Indeed it may very well become those who are more especially concern'd, and who have the advantages of access to familiarity with, and secrecy in Magistrates and great men, to deal with them, though with that submission and meekness which beseems inferiours, yet with that freedome and plainness which beseems friends, and Christians. Especially have liberty to speak, without gratifying the foolish humor of the Rabble, that oftentimes desire to hear their Governours talkt against, and discovered, and they whose own personal knowledge, furnisheth them with matter and ground for reproof, without taking up with the slanders, and groundless surmises of the malicious, or common rumors of idle and impudent talkers and tatlers; these, I say, who have these advantages, are deeply engaged to improve the same, in doing their utmost to discover to them their particular faults, with all the aggravations of them, and to press

them upon those duties, which are so necessary for the
own, and the Kingdomes welfare. If this be the ca
of greatnesse to be secured from all faithful and seri
reproofs, and counsels, and to be betray'd by base flatte
ers, and sordid low-spirited Temporizers, it is as gr
an unhappiness as can befall the sons of men. To
leave to be sick, and one told of it still, it's past reme
to have leave to stab ones self, and no one must dare
hold our hands, are no very desirable privileges
to be suffered to post on to everlasting burnings, with
being told plainly whither we are going. I think
little for our profit, as either of these. It may be of an
ther mind, as loth to be tormented before their time
earnestly pray God their experience give not them
full conviction.

That which I intend under this Head, is the neg
gence of those who are intrusted with the administra
of Justice. When I speak most softly, I cannot but
what is very notorious, *That there are daily Crimes and Offe*
vance at such gross proportions, as is intolerable in the
of the Land. Alas! they have not their distinct capa
ties: they are *Gentlemen*, as well as *Justices*, and th
it seems are inconsistent one with the other. That
Religion, their Oath, their fidelity to God, their Pr
and Country engage them to, is contradicted to a
the Gentility they hear about them, which consists
meer oaths and severity especially to their Compan
who are as deeply guilty of debaucheries, as the
and poorest Wretches of the Nation. And indeed
they with any modesty, or presence of reason take no
of, or be severe against those Vices, which their own
amples encourage even Inferiours, much more
Gentlemen-good-fellows to? Whether this be a
gery or Slander, I appeal to the experience of the
spective Counties where they reside. I intend not

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however in this accusations; wherefore none but the guilty have reason to be angry, and they as little as any. Why should an honest Citizen be displeas'd, to hear another say, *There are many Knaves in the City?* But if it be grievous to them to hear of their faults, their drunkenness, swearing, and such like loosness, let them think what it is to commit them. How loudly did God cry, *Who will rise up for me against the evil doers?* Or, *Who will stand up for me against the workers of iniquity?* And because none would hearken, *God himself hath brought upon them their own iniquity, and cut them off in their wickedness,* Psa. 94. 16. 23. Had our Justices, and all Magistrates, been as careful to prevent the Contagion of Sin in themselves, their Families and Jurisdictions, as they are to hinder the spreading of the Infection, this latter labour might happily have been spared them.

And now I am speaking of Rulers, and Men of Place and Honor, here give me leave sadly to lament it, *That the Nobility and Gentry of our Land, the Major part of them, are arrived to such an height of prophaneness, that they, as being by their Advancements more Conspicuous than others, are most infamous for the several Vices we have mentioned.* Oh where are the hopes for fruits of those sufferings many of them have past through? Do they not detain themselves, as if they were delivered to do all those abominations? Are they not too like that King Ahaz, who being afflicted, *grew worse and worse?* Have they taken such a prejudice against the Word, *Reformation*, that they hate the very thing too, and the least appearance of it? What, do they recoil with greater earnestness to their vicious courses, as having been under a restraint for a while? Are they resolved not to be behind hand in sin for all that? Or do they think to revenge themselves of God for the afflictions they have lain under? Or did they think themselves now so secure, that

without all danger they might provoke the most ha
God? Why, you poor impudent Worms, do you kn
whom you have reproached? Against whom you ha
exalted your voice, and lift up your eyes on high? Be
against the *Holy One of Israel*. Why, you foolish So
of *Belial*, did you think a Title or Place of Hon
would dispence with you, for your Rebellions agai
the Almighty Ruler of the world? Who hath stood
you, and observed all your contempt of him, and
Laws, and hath hitherto spared you out of pity, n
fear. What, because you could proudly insult and d
mineer over your Fellow-creatures, did you think to o
brave God himself? What, did you think a Feather
your Caps, or a ruffling sute, for which fools look at y
with so much Reverence, would procure his respect
Did you think he would be more tender of your Deli
cies, than to treat you so roughly, as he doth inferio
sinners? Did you imagine, when he sent his Messeng
to seize you, when he should Commission either Death
the Devil to lay hold on you, that you should fri
them away with swearing, and banning, and damnin
Or with your Swords and Pistols, as you were wont
serve the Serjeants that came to Arrest you? Did you
magine you had made an agreement with Death a
Hell, that they should never swallow you up? Or th
your submissions to the devil had made him so much yo
friend, that he would not hurt you? At length I befee
you, be convinc't of your mistakes, and humbled for yo
folly; and be perswaded to believe, *That the strictest h
linesse is no dishonour to your greatnesse, nor think that your h
terest, which confer'd this it.* Oh be not so monstrously vi
to abuse Gods bounty, so as to make it but an help
your sinning against him with more freedome and co
stancy. Make not your Estates snares to your souls, b
misspending them only in gratifying your lusts, Appe

and Pride; but improve them for the Honor, and according to the intention of the Donor, that they may not become such an accursed portion to you, that although you should hear the cutting answer given to one of your Predecessors, *In thy life-time thou didst receive thy good things.*

Nor let any of our Great Ones please themselves with conceit, that they are not the persons eminently instrumental in bringing down Judgements upon us, because yet they are freest from the same, as having the conveniencies of removing themselves from that stroke which lights most upon the Meaner sort; for we may frequently find in Scripture, that the sins of the great ones have brought sufferings upon the Commonalty, who also in their place and measure have been as wicked as others. And withall, let them not be too confident, till they are past all danger, till their Harness is put off; or rather, till God hath laid down his Sword. If these Judgements reach them not, God hath yet more in store for the obstinate; and if they escape all here, yet if at length they are cast into the Lake that burns with fire and brimstone, they'l have little cause for boasting, Since then too many of our great men, like those *Jer. 5. 5. Though they have known the way of the Lord, yet have altogether broken the Yoke, and burst the Bonds*: My prayer is, that they may not do as those, *v. 3. Who when they were stricken, did not grieve, but refused to receive correction, and made their faces harder than a flint, and refused to return*, lest God execute on them those threatnings you may read at large, *Jer. 6. Oh that they may receive instruction in time, before they feel that iron rod, which will dash in pieces all it lights on, and comes too late to teach them any thing but what will aggravate their torment.*

11. I am verily perswaded, had this *Plague* befaln us three or fourscore years ago, and had *Popery* been as

rise then, as now it is with us, this would not have be
accounted one of the least procuring causes, by the wi
sober Divines of the Nation, Except this be grown
more innocent thing than formerly, and the Idolatry
it distinguishe away by secret wits; or else Idolatry
grown less offensive to God, than heretofore; we
take the boldness to say, *That the Liturgy we Protest
have had, or have now to exercise the same, to one of the
Communion of our Land, provoking us a God-fearing
worship.* Reason of State, is an Abyss which it becom
not short-sighted Subjects to pry into; but if the pr
rance of this induce any thing contrary to the interest
Religion, he that hath imbib'd but the very principles
Christianity, may confidently pronounce the deepest
litic'ans that advise it, *Stark Fools.* The resolution
constancy of pious Prince *Edward, England's Josiah*,
denying liberty for Mass to his Sister *Mary*, was in h
times accounted singular Piety, even by those Bish
who came to request it. 'Tis somewhat strange,
thinks, to see even the poor *Quakers* themselves dra
to prison, and banish'd the Land, whilst Convent
more expressly *contrary* to the Law of God, and equal
think, to the Law of the Land, are (at least) over-loo
Yea, let me add, this freedome they enjoy, whilst ha
dozen of private Christians, in all things so far as c
cerns Lay-men, conformable to the Church of *Engl*
cannot have liberty to meet together for the private
vice of God; though it were but to joyn their pra
on the behalf of our Land, that it would please God
remove from off us the heavy Judgements we now
under. Could there be no provision made against Se
ous Meetings, without such restraints as these? N
and if they take this liberty by stealth, how much m
secure are twice as many Drunkards in a Tavern, m
one of their Conventicles of Good-fellowship?

than the more Politick, have found a Tavern the safest place for a Meeting. And doth not this abundantly evince, how much the humours and private inclinations of men, oversway and prevail in their administrations by the known Laws? If therefore the spirit of the times, and the inclination of inferiour Magistrates, lay as much against prophaneness, as what they call Phanaticism, this would have no more immunity than that. Let none be offended at my liberty of speech, since doubtless these are things that need a Reformation; I hope 'tis allowable to say so, yea, and necessary too.

And as for Popery, though I involve not the Magistrate in the guilt of all that liberty they assume to themselves; yet I hope we may have free leave to lay Guilt upon it, and to charge a most intollerable impudence upon the Professors, and numerous Abettors of it. How many, both openly and closely, are hard at work for the propagation of that, which is much more hurtful, though not so spreading as the Contagion now amongst us? And that it is not so spreading, we owe not so much to their want of will, or pains, but to the goodness of God, the illness of their Cause, and the better temper of our Clime, fortified with the Truth. But surely it would well deserve the care of those in Power, to do somewhat more to keep the healthful from the sick; and to order that there might not be so much licence given for people to frequent those places, where 'tis not impossible but some may be infected; even such, whose Sense chuseth their Religion; who would have their Devotion, like their Recreations; and a Chappel, like a Play-house: And I wish too many of our Gallants be not of this disposition; but as for others, I would have them go to a Mass to be confirmed against Popery. It is very notorious, what freedoms they take for their Meetings in many places in the Country, as well as City, besides those that may

be privileged? And certainly *England* is not like so soon the better, for being the Stage whereon so much Popish Pageantry, and Antichristian worship is acted. Had *Dagon* been carried about amongst the *Israelites*, with as much reverence, as the Ark was amongst the *Philistines* with rudeness; 'tis likely, that had been attended with as great *Plagues*, as was this. He that considers what Idolatry often brought upon the *Jews*; and shall well contemplate the Popish Devotions, and our present miseries; may see more clearly discern our punishment like to theirs, than a like probable cause of it; and look upon us little more beholden to *Rome*, than they were to *Baal Peor*. If these meek Innocents (who with much adoe bring themselves to call a little humbly, when instead of Fire and Faggot, they are forcit to argue with words) should retort, that we deal as unjustly with them, as the Heathens did with the Primitive Christians, who imputed to them whatever mischiefs befell the Empire; shall be brought to think so too, if they can as easily evade the charge of worshipping Angels, Saints, Bread, Altars, Crucifixes and Images; as those first Christians could free themselves from the palpably false Objection made against them: but in the mean time I cannot be perswaded, but that God is highly provok'd with all those mockeries of Worship which they have devised, and in the midst of us solemnized. *And even for these Impieties may the Plague be broke in upon us.*

12. We may well account amongst our provoking sins, *the sad and lamentable division that have been, and still are in fact amongst us!* And whoever have raised and kept up these; have had not the least influence to procure wrath upon us. Well may that people be divided from God, separated from his love, who are so divided one amongst another. When one part of the Nation hath suffered, then all the other hath rejoyc'd in their

...ain Brethrens Miseries, as contributing to make all more ...
...ness of their Cause, Ambitiously, what the Suffering ...
...ers call Tyranny, Cruelty, and Persecution, those that ...
...dict is, call it a just punishment for their malignity ...
...obstinacy. Oh how just is it then, that a general pun...
...shment should at length work us into a more general ...
...Compassion? That at least we may pity each other, ...
...when we are all in the same misery, that appears the ...
...have nothing of a Party in it, but strikes down on all ...
...sides those that stand before it? Many and great Facti...
...ons in the Western Church, did immediately precede ...
...its being over-run by the *Goths* and *Vandals*, and not on...
...ly in this, but all other corruptions and wars like to them ...
...may be learn'd from the Writers of those dayes: God ...
...of his infinite mercy avert the further Judgements which ...
...such disorders presage. Such is, and long hath been ...
...our case. That the loudest and most earnest entreaties ...
...for peace, have been drowned with the contrary noise ...
...and clamour of the Contentious. What comes from the ...
...weaker and oppressed party, is still rejected as murmu...
...ring and complaining. And those that are in prospe...
...rity, reject the offers which after they would gladly con...
...descend to. Still the side that rules, when they find they ...
...can secure their Interests without any compliance, partly ...
...out of a jealousie of being undermined; partly ...
...out of a love to have the preheminence; and partly ...
...out of a desire of revenge, are far from hearkning to ...
...the most reasonable motions for Unity and Peace. And ...
...he that mentions, or laments our divisions with never so ...
...Catholick and impartial a spirit and design, if he charge ...
...not all the blame upon one Party, shall scarce receive ...
...any thanks from either. If he cries out of nothing but ...
Antichristianism, *Idolatry*, *Superstition*, and *Tyranny*, ...
...then he shall be hugg'd by some; and if he inveigh bit...
...terly against *Schism*, *Sedition*, *Faction*, *Hypocrisie*, and ...

charge

Oh unhappy England! How long hast thou been tost and tor by the hands of Violence and Contention? How oft hast thou been bent this way, and that, into cruel extremes? Oh, when at length will thou be set free and obtain a quiet rest? Oh that this might be the happy effect of Gods heavy hand now upon us? We, and our Posterity, then would have cause to say, Oh blessed Plagues that befell us in 1665. which discovered to the Inhabitants of England their Plague of their own heart, their uncharitableness and animosities one against another, and cur'd them herein, and reconciled them into a blessed Unity, Peace, Love and Amity. To this wish of mine, let every Reader say Amen, and so be it.

Oh what is become of that humble, patient, self-denying, loving Spirit, which was once the Character of the followers and friends of our gracious, tender-hearted, and compassionate Lord Jesus? Strange, that ever the Gospel of Peace should furnish the corruption of men with matters for strife? When one great, and very great design of it, is, to promote the truest, and most solid, and universal Peace amongst the Sons of men; which is the natural Consequent of their being at peace with God, through the great Reconciler. And yet what would we have? There's scarce a man but speaks for peace, and vehemently declaims against dissensions. Few there are but wonder there should be any

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differences in the World, and that none but all alike
can please. But what a monde must he have to live in?
And this alas is our misfortune, the World is full of
such Magistrial Spirits, that they, forsooth, would have
Dictators in the Church. And though themselves may
be strangely wavering, and crooked by a Devotion for a
Party; yet would they be the Centre where all various and
crooked motions should meet, their Opinions and Wills must
be the Rule and Standard of Truth and Duty. Though many
be never so much blinded by Prejudice or Self-conceit,
yet they take it ill, if others will not see with their eyes,
blindfold themselves, and take them for our Guides.
Now in our Nation, one may wonder what is in the
minds of some, that they are fain so much in love with
some inconsiderable things, that they rigorously exact
from all others an observance of them; And these wonder
there should be any found to scruple at them: But its
well, if either remember their own ignorance, weakness,
and liableness to mistake, which might move them both
to a more charitable construction of their Brethrens ac-
tions. The overtures for agreement, which come from
the weaker, are sometimes disgrac'd by those of their
own way (the Zealots of them) as proceeding from
Cowardize and temporizing, and most frequently smil'd
at by the Party that hath got the upper-hand, as fancy and
impertinent: The condescensions of those that are in pow-
er, are usually little more than to will and command; yet it
may be, entreat all that dissent from them, to a through-
compliance, and then they'l account them humble and
peaceable, but scarce otherwise, be their demands never
so large and unreasonable. And if any true Lover of Cha-
rity, not of the name, but thing, shall propose a way for
the reconciling of differences, he's look'd awry at, es-
pecially by the higher side, and becomes less capable of
preferment (except as a means to corrupt him) as be-

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ſing for the cleerly baptized into their Party.

Thus have we got new for *Paul*, and another for *Apol*[los], nay worſe diſtinguiſhing names than theſe; and what book ſlides are too guilty of leaving againſt ſuch a one for not coming over wholly to them, how little done toward a Mid-way meeting? Who formerly have been, and who now eſpecially are too blame in the L[ong] for keeping open our breaches, is not very difficult to partially to diſcover: But ſtill it ſo falls out, that the who are moſt in fault, may leaſt ſafely be told ſo; for this muſt needs bee acknowledged, *That they who have opportunity and power of making a very fair and ſatisfactory Accommodation betwixt thoſe that differ and yet do it not: ſo as thoſe neglect comes to, are the perſons guilty of continuing the diviſions. They who had formerly this opportunity, and neglected it, were in their time guilty; and by conſequence they who now enjoy the ſame advantages, and yet improve them not, muſt needs fall under the ſame charge.* I think that man undertakes a very hard task, whoſe conſtant affections, and zeal for his particular Opinions, ſhall engage him to defend all that is done, by the Retainers to the way which he himſelf hath imbraced. For my part I ſhould think it a piece of difficulty to maintain, that even our firſt Reformers from the Romiſh Superſtitions were none of them acted by private Aims, and Secular Intereſt, or miſcarried in no circumſtance of managing affairs, though the main cauſe was moſt juſt and honourable. Let who liſt then for mee, enter into a defence of this ſide or that, not only for theſe twenty, but hundred and twenty years, for ſo long a date did ſome of our unhappy differences bear: And many will confidently avert, *That a Puritan is of as ancient ſtanding, as an Engliſh Proteſtant, and was once thought beſt worthy of the Name; and that a Non-conformiſt was found, as ſoon as there appeared a Martyr for the Reformed Cauſe:* Not yet

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...ssifying to Posterity the Sacrifice we give any imperti-
...nent relation of all the disorders that did precede or
...accompany or immediately follow upon the more
...open and violent contentions which have been amongst
...which might rend rather to exasperate all, than pro-
...any; for doubtless such miscarriages have been of all
...(or partial principles this way or that) the while
...will) that hearty Repentance, and mutual forgive-
...more becoming all, than Self-justifications and
...Recriminations; if there be any yet guilty of
...much pride and unthankfulness. I heartily pray, that
...who have so long survived their crimes, may be deep-
...humbled for their forgiven Nation on a flame (which
...the blood that was spilt hath not yet quenched) for the
...and that they have brought upon the Protestant Cause,
...all their breach of Oaths, Vows and Covenants,
...debasing their Consciences, and proceeding Religion
...carrying on their corrupt designs, and wilful letting
...the opportunities they had, for the promoting the
...of Christ, and establishing a settled Peace in the
...churches, for the gaining of which, some excellent
...did so earnestly (though too unsuccessfully) la-
...But oh is it not strange and sad, that after we have
...long seen and smarted under the deplorable effects not
...already, we should yet be so far from embracing the bles-
...sary means of Reconciliation as ever? That after a
...Peace hath been graciously restored, the Church
...should still be so much divided? And that after divers
...moderate persons of different perswasions, have so plain-
...ly laid down the methods for such an agreement, as might
...have made us a Church glorious to all the World; yea,
...of those things which are the true glory of a Church which
...would have made us also happy in the approbation and
...favour of the God of Peace and Holiness. The Lord o-
...pen the eyes, and soften the hearts of all, that at length we

discern

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...ublick power, and Enact Laws only to promote that, and to enforce the Laws he hath already made, and would but bring our acknowledgements of Scripture-sufficiency into practise.

The Lord grant this may be the resolution and endeavour of all in this Church and State, who, under God, are in a capacity of restoring health and tranquility to a people so sorely weakned, by their being crumbled into so many Sects and Parties, that at length becoming one in holiness and love, and turning as one man to the Lord, serving him in a pure language with joynt consent, we may be one with us, and the unity of our prayers may help on to their success, even the removal of those Judgements, that were inflicted to drive us to such an Unity.

That I may now, lastly, sum up much in one word, we have been a people guilty of as wilful and malicious contempt of God, his Gospel, Ministers and People, and neglect of all true Religion, as ever any Nation of the World was, that hath enjoyed the means and opportunities for, and lain under the engagements to Reformation that we have done. How have we trampled our mercies in the dirt, or thrown them in the face of the giver? How soon have we forgot his Rod, when we have been but just from under the smart of it? How have we contemn'd the threatnings of further wrath denounc't against us by his Word and Ministers? How hath even profest Atheism abounded, that hath made a scorn of, not only the duties, but Doctrines of Christianity? To renounce all Religion, was to be taken for a Wit: And by their long impunity in wicked courses, were men more confirmed in their Atheistical conceits. Was it not fit then that death should reduce them to their right mind, when they are so wilfully distracted? But especially for practical Atheists, who whilst they profess to know God, glorifie

nifie him not as God, but in words deny and dishonour him; how do they abound in our Land? Except in some formalities of external performance, and publick Worship, and a meer Opinion; How little appearance is there of a Church, or Christianity amongst us? Are we not rather a Cage of unclean Birds? Look into the Court and University, the City and Country, all sorts and conditions of men; and say then, whether are we not overflowed with prophaneness, which its just shou[ld] be followed with a deluge of wrath to wash it away? [To] what a pass are we come, amongst whom nothing is [so] strange as serious holiness and strict walking? To be a diligent server of the most holy God, is made a matter of reproach. To live up to the principles of that Religion, we all pretend to, is to expose ones self at the least, to scoffs and jeers. All that is past jesting in Religion, is accounted fancy and hypocrisie. Serious discourse is but fantastical Canting. To mention any word of Christ or his Apostles, without making a jest of it, or the Sacred Name of God, except in an Oath, or to take it in vain, is an offence to many tender ears. To admonish and reprove a Drunkard or a Swearer, is to become a Busie-body, and self-conceited. To speak of God, Christ, Death, Judgement and Eternity, and the great matters of Religion, is the way to have some disgraceful title or other presently put upon you. Godliness it self is look'd on but as a faction, and as such despis'd and vil'd; and the most unblameable professors of it, stigmatized with such names, as being designed for their disgrace, too plainly shew what is their fault, even purer and precise circumspect walking. Now may we justly revive the complaints made by godly Bishops and Ministers in former times, that let them walk never so conformably to the Law of Church and State, only endeavouring to avoid the sins of the times, and in their pla[ces]

and

and calling to bear witness against them, endeavouring to live convincing, exemplary lives, and to promote godliness in their own families, and amongst their Neighbors, presently they shall be called *Puritans* (for that was, in *Bolton*'s phrase, the honourable Nickname of Christianity in those daies) and consequently, have less favour then a Papist, or carnal Gospeller. The most powerful and awakening preaching, and serious affectionate praying, where it is to be had in publick, are disgraced by the name of popular things, and such Ministers the less favour'd, because flockt after. And here is the fruit of the afflictions that have so long lain on us, even for such sins as these!

Oh how justly may God take up against us all those complaints that we find in his Prophets, he doth against the *Jews*? He hath sent his Messengers early and late, giving us precept upon precept, line upon line, calling to us, Oh do not these abominable things; they will be bitterness in the end, and yet we have turned the deaf ear. Nay, when we have pretended to enquire of the Lord our duty, yet when it hath been revealed to us, we have at least in our works said, *We will not do all that the Lord hath spoken, but we will walk after the wayes of our own hearts; we will never live such strict and godly lives; this is more ado than needs; there is no such danger in following our lusts; this is but the device of Preachers to terrifie us. It was well enough with us, when we lived in those sins they keep such a stir against; and we never had good World, since so much Preaching and Godliness came up.* How have we mock'd God by our pretences to serve him, when our hearts have been far from him? And those very persons, who in the Church were confessing their sins, and praying, *that they might live a godly and sober life*; when their Devotions are ended, will do little less than deride godliness, and run into all excess of riot,

and wonder at them as precise fools, who run not with them. And all this must be solved by crying, *The Temple of the Lord, The Temple of the Lord*; The Church, The Church; by being zealous for some Ceremony or Custome of little concernment, and railing at all that are not of their humor, as disobedient, factious, and Phanatical. How is the service of God dwindled to a meer formality, and many understand no more by it than a devout using some particular Form or Mode of prayers, and by this they think to purchase Heaven sure enough, and make amends for all their neglect of personal and family-duties, for the earthlines of their hearts, for the viciousnes and disorder of their lives? Oh how have fools made a mock of sin, and look on it as a trifling thing, that men need not to be so shy of. How many pretty Pleas and excuses have they got for whoredome, drunkenness, and the most monstrous pride. If the plainest Word of God contradict their lusts, it shall be of no value with them, some trick or other they have to evade it; or, if they have nothing to say, yet they will set their wills against Gods Commands, and flatly disobey them. Have we not even wisht there were never a Bible in the world, no God in Heaven, and lived as if indeed there was not? And alas, how small a Remnant is there that have escaped the common pollutions? How few that have been deeply affected with the dishonours done to their heavenly Father? Who have stood on the Lords side, and been faithful to the cause of holiness; these have been but as the gleaning of the Vintage, as after the gathering of the Summer fruits, here and there one in a Town; and these (even as the Remnant of the Faithful amongst the *Israelites*) have been the wonder and scorn of the rest. These have been the Song of Drunkards; and they, together with the Word they walk by, have been the sport of those whose

hearts

hearts have been merry, as *Sampſon* was to the *Philiſtine Lords*. They and their Scripture ſerve the prophane Gallant to ſhew his wit, and help the Poet to matter for his Play. Theſe for the moſt part are looked at as the moſt pernicious to the places where they live. And upon them malice hath its narroweſt eye. He that departs from evil, makes himſelf a prey; they have hated, and put to ſilence him that *hath reproved in the Gate, and abhorred him that ſpake uprightly*; and after all, wiped their mouths, and ſaid, *Let the Lord be glorified*. Were not we arrived to a moſt doleful ſtate, when the moſt exact obedience to the Laws of God, was accounted more diſgraceful, than the moſt open violation of them; and few durſt plead for, and practiſe holineſs with that confidence, that others durſt commit, and own known ſin? How hath God waited long, and made the power of his long-ſuffering to appear, ſtriving with us in the wayes of love, and mingling corrections with his mercies, that he might prevail with us to pity our ſelves, but all in vain? He puniſh'd us with the Sword, and kept us long in the Furnace, and we are come out leſs refined. Again, he tryed us with mercies, but we improved them not. He hath threatned, when he might have deſtroyed; and born with us long to prevent our ruine, and yet nothing would work: But we have preſt him with our iniquities, and even made him to ſerve with our ſins; we have grieved his Spirit by our ſtubbornneſs and rebellion, and have begun to think, becauſe he kept ſilence, he was ſuch a one as we, and liked well enough of our wayes, and becauſe his Judgments were not ſpeedily executed, our hearts have been fully ſet to do evil. And when we were come to this paſs, and God was even weary with with-holding, and there were ſo few to ſtand in the gap, to turn away his wrath, and even of them, many in a great meaſure thruſt

out of it; were we not ripe for destruction? Was not our Ephah full? Is it then any wonder, if at length, God be risen to plead with us, in a manner that shall make us know and feel, that he ruleth in the world, who will by no means acquit the impenitent? who, though he bear long, yet will not alwayes bear with a stiff-necked generation. Could we expect any other, than that God should make bare his Arm, and visit us for these things, and ease himself of his Adversaries, and avenge himself of such obstinate contempts of his Laws and Authority? And what, *Shall the Lion roar, and not the Beasts of the Forrest tremble?* Is God angry, and shall not we fear? Doth he shake his Rod over us, nay, lay it upon us, so that thousands feel it in their flesh, and all hear the sound of its terrible lashes, and yet do we not tremble? Shall not our haughty countenances change, and the joynts of our loins be loosed, now there is an invisible hand come forth, writing such bitter things against us? Hath God such a suit controversie with us? Hath he done so much, and will he yet do these and these things against us, and will thou not yet prepare to meet thy God. Oh *England!* the dreadful sensleſness and stupidity of the hearts of our people! How few are yet careful to learn righteousness, by the Judgements that are amongst us! Notwithstanding this day of Adversity, how few will be brought to consider? Is not this a direful presage of fatal wrath? And that it is even an utter destruction that is coming upon us? Oh what a spirit of slumber and sleepiness hath possess'd the most? If it is not so with those about thee, Reader, thou dwellest in a happy place. Though people hear of thousands dying about them, and have daily reason to expect their turn shall be the next, yet how regardless do they appear of all due preparations for it, as ever? They flatter themselves with a conceit, that yet they may escape, and that death shall

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come nigh their dwellings, and so post off all thoughts of it, taken up with the very same business, designs and pleasures, they were always wont.

But what should we say, Can Sword, or Famine, or Plague, or any outward affliction, work on them, who have been nothing bettered, but rather hardned by commands, promises and threatnings? Can the Rod plead with, and importune them, so as the Word hath done? Will sickness inform, command, argue and beseech so affectionately as the Minister was wont? Where *Moses* and the Prophets might not be heard, what can prevail? *If bewing them with the Prophets, and slaying them with the words of his mouth would not affect them, Hos. 6:5.* Shall the execution of his Judgements bring light? Why yes, no doubt God hath his Chastisements, which setting on, and enforcing his Word, do often humble and reform souls, and he hath also those punishments by which he destroyes. And if men will strive against his Spirit, and resist its workings; shut their eyes against the light, contemn Instruction, yea, harden themselves under correction, and rather hate the God who makes them smart, than the sins that procure it, like those in *Rev. 16.* who blasphemed God when they were in anguish; what can be expected, but the final ruine of the people or persons that are guilty of such stubbornness and impenitency? And oh that this were not the case of multitudes amongst us! The Lord awaken those that are yet in a capacity, to a timely prevention of such a doleful misery. And thus I have given an account of those crying sins that are to be found amongst us, which belong to the first branch, which comprehended under it, those sins that were more evident and notorious. And by this we have made way for the second, to discover some such miscarriages, which may be less evident, but no less heinous than these, as being indeed in a great

measure productive of them, and therefore I thought it methodical enough, to proceed from the sensible effects to the somewhat more latent cause.

All that I shall speak of the latter branch, I shall reduce to this one Head; namely, *That it may very justly be presumed, to have a great influence in the procuring our miseries, that so many able Ministers of Christ have of late been silent, and in a manner useless, compared with what they might have been, had they continued their Publick Employments.*

Thus far I hope none will be offended; for if it be granted *de facto*, that there are many whom God had furnished with abilities to serve him in the Ministry, which he had called them to, that have not exercised these abilities to the best advantage in that Function, (and I think he must have a good stock of impudence who shall deny, that many of those who have been of late unserviceable, were so accomplish'd) then I shall easily evidence, that hereby God hath been much dishonoured and provoked, whose soever the fault hath been; which is that I shall briefly enquire into, and discover, and then give in full evidence of my Assertion.

I know, it may so happen, that what I write, may displease one and another; but for that I am indifferent, having resolved to give no allowance to my passion or prejudice, but to use the same impartiality and faithfulness, to the utmost of my power, that I should do, if, so soon as ever I had finished my work, I was to receive my Summons to appear before the just Judge of Heaven and Earth. Nor would I willingly speak any thing but what the undoubted Interest of Christ and his Gospel engage me to, and will warrant me in: And whilst I have the Lord engaged in the whole Cause which I undertake and plead; I value not a straw at my foot, what the most enraged potent malice can do: Nay, I dare

then

then bespeak all in the words of the King of Egypt to Josiah, a little varied, 2 Chron. 35. 21. *What have I to do with thee, Oh man, who ever thou art? I come not against thee this day, but against Sin, wherewith I have war; for God commanded me to this work. Forbear from meddling with God, who is with me, that he destroy thee not.* And I think a man may with as much comfort be a Martyr for the unity and peace of the Church, and advancement of holiness, as ever any of our Protestants were, for the defence of the Reformed Religion; (and indeed this was more their cause, than Christianity it self, if we consider it right) yea, though he have a sheet of paper pinn'd to his back, that shall call him Schismatical and Seditious, and as such he be punished, as they we know were burnt for *Hereticks*. But to the business in hand. As to the matter of fact, its well enough known, what conditions were required of all that would continue in the Ministry, and still are exacted, of all that will enter upon it, which multitudes not submitting to, were suspended and silenced; and others, who both by their parents and themselves, were designed for that Employment, and accordingly educated, were prevented of their intentions. The ill effects hereof I shall speak something to anon.

Now that I may deal fairly and plainly, this I must needs say; That if there have been any of these Dissenters, who were convinced in their consciences, that the things commanded were such, as all circumstances considered, they might lawfully have submitted to; but yet out of faction, humor, obstinacy, a desire to gratifie, or promote a party, or any such carnal principle, did refuse such submission; they cannot be excused from the guilt of deserting their charges, and of the many ill consequences of that desertion. What can any man in reason desire more? For it is as such they suffer, and not meerly

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as mis-informed, much lefs sure as invincibly ignorant, or as men that would not sin; and if they have indeed been guilty of the Crimes, for which their punishments are propounded, I readily joyn with their most forward Accusers: but oh that the punishment had stayed till the Crime had been proved, and laid on those that were found guilty?

But on the other hand, if there were any, who did all probable means for their satisfaction, (being earnestly desirous to have continued in the work of the Lord) and after all, remained perswaded, that they could not comply with what was enjoyned them, without wilful sinning against God, then they who by their Imposition did necessitate them to forsake their Ministry, are liable to the former charge, viz. are guilty of their Ejection and of the effects thereof, except they had sufficient reason for so doing. Would they have any thing spoken more candidly and gently?

Now whether there be any of the former sort, or no, I cannot, nor dare expressly affirm; and I think, till it shall acknowledge, or some other way discover it, (more than I for my part have known them to do) it can be known only to him from whom no secret thoughts are hid; but I desire them to deal faithfully with their own hearts, and if they are conscious to themselves of any such ill Principles, and grounds of their not conforming to their Rulers Laws, to be humbled for, and exercise them.

That there are many such ejected, and prevented from the Ministry, as I described in my latter supposition, I cannot but believe, as having for my self, the testimony of my own Conscience, in the sight of God; and for other such Professions from men that have done nothing, (as I know, to forfeit their credit; and such Reasons to make these Professions appear credible; that I am little

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confident of it; than I am that there is such a place as *Rome* or *Paris*, which I know only by hear-say: I say, little less confident of this, that there are many who yield not a Conformity to what was imposed, not out of Hypocrisie or Humour, but out of a fear of displeasing God, and hurting their own Souls.

If this then be acknowledged, I think those who have cast and kept such out, have very great cause to be humbled for their severity towards them, according to the measure they were instrumental herein: Except (I added) they had sufficient Reason for their so doing. And that I shall grant they had, if they manifest either of these two things, which are all the grounds I can imagine.

1. That there are as good effects of this their Ejection, as I can produce ill ones.

2. Or that the nature of the things imposed on them, was such, that it had been of as dreadful consequence to have dispenst with Conformity to them, as thus to deal with them for not rendring such a Conformity.

But till either of these be proved, or some other satisfactory reason assigned (giving leave soberly to debate the case) I shall for the conviction, and humiliation of the guilty, mention a very few of the many sad effects of this their exclusion.

1. The first is, *The unreformedness, and wickedness of multitudes, that through Gods blessing upon their endeavours, might have been converted and reformed.* And that this might have been in all probability accomplished, we may very reasonably argue, from that eminent success which God gave to many of their publick labours, and by some fruits, since then, of their private endeavours.

Let none here wilfully mistake, and say, that by converting men, I mean nothing else but to turn them to a party, or an opinion; for I profess I intend no such thing: but the very same that Christ doth, when hee tells us,

That

That except we be Converted, we cannot enter into the Kingdome of Heaven, and that the Apostle doth, when he speaks of our being *turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God*: Even the turning the bent of mens hearts and lives, from sin and the creature, to God by Jesus Christ, and to the wales of holiness, let them be of what opinion they will, as to the several forms and modes amongst us. Oh how many fewer Drunkards, Swearers, Whoremongers, Oppressors and Cheaters might there have been amongst us, had they had the liberty to have preached down these sins, whose only study and business it was to decry and shame them, and bring men from the love and practise of them? How many more might there have been, who as true mourners in our *Zion*, would have been humbled for their own, and the Nations sins, and laboured by all means to have prevented Gods wrath; had they in all places enjoyed those means for their Conversion, which they sometimes did, and might yet have done? If then the multitudes of provoking sinners, and the scarcity of humble, holy, praying Christians, have been any ground of our sufferings, can it be doubted whether that which hath been so much the cause of those, hath done any thing to the procuring of these.

Oh! for the Lords sake bethink your selves, all you that are concerned; Was it just and equal dealing, when the Prince of Darkness was advanc'd with all his might into the field, then to disband, and put out of Commission so many experienced Leaders, that in their own Persons, and by encouraging and guiding their several Companies, would have done their best to resist him? Do you herein consult the pleasure of the great *Captain of our Salvation*, from whom you own your selves to have received your Offices, only for the successful carrying on of his Designs, and the fighting of his Battles?

No,

Nay, and all this you have done, because they submitted not to some things, which you your selves call Indifferent, and which they believed, were contrary to the former instructions they had received from their Lord and Master.

Judge in your Consciences, Do you think it is more acceptable to Christ that the Souls of men, whom hee thought worth his precious Hearts-blood, should perish, rather than some Ceremony or Injunction of yours be omitted? Did he ever in his actions or Doctrine manifest such a contempt of Souls, and such an esteem for a Ceremony? Consider his Life and Death, and read his Discourses to the Phariſees, and then judge. Are Salvation and Damnation indifferent things? And shall they be leſs regarded than ſuch? Oh how will you compenſate for the Diſ-ſervice you have already done to the Goſpel? It is not all your Revenues can do it, though your Repentance and Reformation of ſuch miſcarriages for the future may do much. Bee not offended with my freedome of ſpeech: for (God is my Witneſs) I ſpeak not out of paſſion, nor a deſire to make you odious; but out of a juſt zeal for the Cauſe of our deareſt Lord, and the Concern of mens immortal Souls. What amends will you ever bee able to make to the poor Creatures, who may now bee tormented in Hell, for want of thoſe means of prevention which you deprived them of? Though they may have had thoſe other advantages which may save them inexcuſable before God; yet how will you excuſe the denying them the beſt you might have afforded?

You may deride, ſtorm at, or contemn theſe expoſtulations of a poor Worm like your ſelves: but conſider, beſeech you, what anſwer you will make the great Judge of Heaven and Earth, who will come ſhortly in Glory and Powe: to plead his own, and his peo-

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ples Cause? when he will regard no man for the ... ...
...ious Titles he hath had, or great Offices he hath born... ...
his Church (for then, well fare the Pope and his Cle... ...
but they who have done and taught his Commandm... ...
them be of never such diminutive titles and esteem, ...
shall be accounted great in his Kingdome. *And Th...*
This is our comfort, by his Word we shall be judged at l...
here we may be tryed by it. Then we shall all stand ...
qual terms, and the arbitrary determinations of frail ...
shall no more take place, but there abide an inquisition, ...
that Bar we appeal, by that Judgement let us stand or ...
either we refer our selves, and if we may not be heard ...
do will patiently and cheerfully wait that final hearing ...
last of our Cause.

But now hear, for your own sakes at least, if not ... ...
our beseechings and tears, not the cry and blood of ... ...
may be regarded. Do you think this is a slight matt... ...
And that you can easily shift it off, if they bee re... ...
and at your hands? Did Christ dye for souls, and ... ...
they escape who murder them? And do they do any ... ...
who hinder those that would run to help and save th... ...
Is the silent Watchman be so damnably guilty, what ... ...
they that silence the Watchmen? To conclude, w... ...
then it had not been more acceptable to God, more ... ...
correspondent to your Commission, more beseeming ... ...
place and profession, more for the advancement of ... ...
ligion, and the eternal Welfare of Souls; to ha... ...
countenanced and encouraged faithful Labourers in ... ...
Vineyard of the Lord, whose only delight was, to ... ...
employed in his Service; rather than to have offe... ...
them such terms, which Christ never bid you, and ... ...
exclude them for not accepting those terms, I think, ...
own Consciences may easily determine now, be sure ... ...
Lord of the Vineyard will shortly.

Another Effect of their removal from the Ministry, ...

That many Places are left destitute, and many are supplied with scandalous, insufficient, scandalous men. Had their rooms been fill'd with others, as learned, pious, and industrious as they; yet could they, who cast them forth, hardly evade the former charge, except they could manifest that the Harvest was not great enough to have required all their utmost conjunct diligence. But it is beyond all contradiction evident, That in many places since their removal, there have been no Ministers at all; in some as bad as none, in others worse than none. Let none maliciously interpret my Accusation higher than I design it, which is not at all of the innocent. I censure no man as a Conformist, but reverence and esteem all those, who by their Lives and Doctrines, have apparently endeavoured to advance Religion; of which number I am confident, there are many Conformable men. And I abhor that uncharitable, censorious Spirit, which condemns all that are not just of their own Way. But on the other side, I think all are engag'd to be as far from palliating the notorious miscarriages of others. Oh how many scandalous Ministers have we got, that are far from deserving the name of Christians? That should rather be uncased out of the Church, than admitted into the Pulpit? This is so manifest, That sober men, though of their own way, acknowledge and lament it. How many are there, that more effectually preach for the Devil all the Week, than for God upon his Day; whose lives do more to set up prophaneness, than their Sermons to suppress it? Are there not many openly guilty of that Drunkenness, Wantonness, Swearing, and such like Looseness, which they are appointed to turn others from? And are these wickednesses provoking in the people, and not in their Teachers, who can never be guilty alone? Are any men capable of offering such an affront to God, and doing so much hurt to mens Souls by their wickedness, as they from whose

Lives

Lives should be learnt what is acceptable to God, and necessary for us? 'tis I remember the phrase of an excellent Divine, *A Stephens Minister, is the Devil in his Sacrificalibus.*

I list not here to blaze abroad all the disorders of the Clergy; I shall not insist upon the ignorance and insufficiency of any, though in point of honour they were concerned to have provided against such, who did labour with so much earnestness declaim against making Preachers of the lowest of the people. I will not meddle with that Tribe, that lives by the Cathedrals. I will not tell them oblique preaching against that holiness which they pretend to preach up. I shall not speak of the Pride and Covetousness, the Lazines and negligence of Pluralists and Non-residents, and of all those, who too apparently seek their own honour and profit, from the places they are entrusted in, rather than the Salvation of Souls. These things I shall not dilate upon, because I would not so much swell my Paper, and lest I should be thought to rail: Only let me beg the guilty to charge these Crimes home on their own Consciences, as men that value their everlasting happiness; for doubtless God is much displeased with the sins of those, whose Callings have most a relation to him, and especially with the most heinous sin of making Religion only as a stirrup, by it to get up into Dignities and Preferments; which they who could see and censure in others, should be careful themselves to avoid. But those I mainly intend, are the grossly vicious, and debauch'd, who are most unworthy to take Gods Name into their mouths, to declare the Covenants of Scriptures, who themselves hate to be reformed. Good Lord! That ever it should come to pass in a Christian Church, reformed from the Corruptions that had overspread Christendome, that infamously lewd and dissolute men should be Ordained into, and con-

mued in the Ministry, when godly, sober men are excluded, and kept out! Oh how might the Romanist insult for such an acknowledgement, if the Pope and his Cardinals, with the rest of their *Hierarchy*, were not known all the world over? But with us, such doings are capable of far greater aggravations than with them: Oh that I could speak so sharply, as might displease our Church-Governours into a Reformation of this Corruption. What, are Wolves fittest to be Shepherds of the flocks? Can the devils Vassals destroy his Kingdome? Must stark mad-men be made Physicians, and sent to recover other men to their wits? Must they that have the Plague-sores running upon them, be sent among others to prevent their infection? Is not a Pest-house a fitter place for such a man, than a Pulpit? Are Traytors and Incendiaries, the fittest men to reclaim others from their Rebellion? Are they likely to honour God, and the Gospel, and save mens Souls, who do as it were by their actions, say; *Come, Parishioners, follow me; whatever I jest to you in the Church about God and Christ, Heaven and Hell; these are but idle Dreams, or such matters as you need not much regard; God is an hard Master, his Laws are too strict; it's best to take our pleasures, and satisfie our lusts, come on it what will; you entred into too strict a Covenant in Baptism, you had better serve the Devil, than this Jesus Christ, who lales such hard things on his Followers; what need you regard his Bloud, he shed it, that you might have leave to live wickedly; or however, 'tis of no great worth; for you had better be in an Ale-house, or Whore-house, than the Heaven he hath purchast.* Are not these, think you, sweet Preachers of the Gospel? And let them consider then how well they have discharged their trust, who set them up, and maintain them, whil'st they shut forth those who would make it their whole business, to carry on the very same design which Christ came into the world for.

If any should here object, and say, *But these persons are peaceable, whilst your godly ones are turbulent and disobedient*; I shall wish him to stay till I come presently to speak a word or two to that; only here let me answer, *It seems strange to me, that those men must pass for peaceable and obedient, who are known Rebels against the Laws of Christ, when they must be accounted disobedient, who had rather lose their lives, than wilfully break one of the least of these his Commands, only because they submit not to Humane Impositions; which yet they would do, did they not think themselves pre-obliged by the Laws of Christ to the contrary.* Is this fair dealing? I put it to thy own Conscience, Reader, be thou who thou wilt, and as partial as thou wilt. And if I went no farther, I suppose I have spoke enough to manifest, that there have been such sad consequences of the ejection of all who conformed not, that doubtless God hath been hereby dishonored, and displeased, and for this hath a Controversie with our Land.

3. I might moreover add, *the feuds and animosities which have hereby been fomented and heightned, and are like to be still perpetuated*; whereas had there been such an abatement of things required, as might well have been granted, in order to the retaining them in their places, this might have been an happy mean for the composure of our greatest differences: and people could not have taken notice of such divisions amongst us, nor could Papists have had so much reason to hit us in the teeth with them; nor could they whose spirits were too much exasperated, or judgements corrupted, have had so much occasion to make Factions and Parties, and so much of it had been prevented.

4. Nor yet think it nothing, *that so many innocent men and their families, are exposed to such great necessities*, that some of them have scarce had bread and water to keep them alive; and some have been glad to beg

their

themselves to hard labour to procure them a livelihood. Certainly, the very cryes of their Children for bread, sounding in the ears of a most just and merciful God, are not dis-regarded: And whether they who have reduc'd them to these exigencies, have observed the great Rule, not only of Christianity, but even Nature it self, *To do to others as they would be done to*, I would wish them well to consider. If any should retort, *That they themselves were once so dealt with.* I answer, *I think they were used nothing near so harshly.* But grant they were, the greater was their Injustice which was the cause; and the more inexcusable they, who inflict on others the hard measure, which they themselves lately groaned under; and make them their patterns, whom they complain of, and condemn. And had it been (as it was not) those persons who injured them, whom now they cause to suffer, I wonder where Revenge is made their duty; but this is a Church-man, must sometimes pass for zeal for the Church.

It was easie to instance in more effects of this their Ejection, which have been injurious to Religion, and the souls of men. Hence it's come to pass, that their endeavours in a private way, by personal discourses, or writings, to reclaim Sinners, are much frustrated; for they are looked upon as a kind of distinct party, and so let them be never so careful to insist only on the most uncontroverted truths of Religion, yet will many through prejudice misunderstand all they say, as if they were pleading their own cause, and endeavouring to gain Proselytes to themselves, whilst they are only striving to win souls to Christ. When they are pressing men upon holiness and diligence for their salvation, some are prone to flatter themselves with a conceit, that this only is their strict and singular Opinion; and all that they say or do in Religion, is put upon the score of a Party, as if in these things they

differed from others, and therefore are they disregarded. And thus it is also as to the people, who are known to love and adhere to them; for their exact walking, is look on but as the following a Sect, and which need not therefore be imitated. And it can hardly be thought how many souls miscarry through these mistakes, which might have been much prevented, by that concord and mutual love which might have made all have been esteemed as Brethren. Moreover, hence it is, that these being now counted disaffected, and discontented persons, many who bore them a spleen (for their love 'tis not impossible to meet with pretences to vent it) for they narrowly watch them in all their wayes (and a little love to the Commonwealth, with a Dose of Revenge and Malice, how vigilant will it make men?) and are still ready to accuse them of something or other, they know not what, to bring them into trouble. And if they do but with all peaceableness meet together with their Neighbors and Friends to quicken, comfort, and build up one another in their most holy Faith; yet, if they do but continue those meetings they were wont to have in times of greatest liberty, presently they are liable to disturbance and punishment, as men holding unlawful Assemblies; whereas, had not such terms been put upon them, as necessarily put a difference betwixt them and others, they might have been *esteemed* as Loyal Subjects, as they indeed *are*, and their actions had not been so obnoxious to groundless censures and accusations, nor they ever hurried to prison, or forc't some other way to suffer, for nothing but the mere surmises of the malicious. But I shall not give in more particulars: And whether these things I have mentioned are well-pleasing to God, or whether they may not rather have help on his indignation against us, let all that are unbyast determine.

As to the truth of what I have spoke, I think it cannot be gain said; and what can be answered, I cannot devise, except

except what I before hinted, may should say, *That by their removal, the Peace of Church and State is secured, which otherwise had been hazarded.* To which I answer:

1. Might not this Peace have been procured better, by laying it upon those things whereon Christ hath laid the peace of his Church? And not to make new Laws, to which whilst men in Conscience cannot give obedience, they must be judged obstinate, as the Courtiers served *Daniel*; surely this is hard measure, when the things required are, in the judgement of the Imposers, not necessary till they have commanded them, and so might have been left as indifferent, as they are in their own natures, and then how little contention had there been about them, especially since these their *indifferent things* are such kind of meer impertinencies, that no confusion is like to follow from the non-determination of them, and therefore are no proper Subjects for the exercise of Church-power; except they take a delight to throw in bones of Contention to see men a quarrelling.

2. Might these persons be excused from those kind of Subscriptions and Declarations which are commanded them, they are ready to give in all the security, that can in reason be demanded, *That they will be careful to preserve and promote the Publick Peace, so they may but have liberty to speak plain without ambiguous entangling phrases.* And if plain oaths and promises may not be thought sufficient to oblige them to this, what hold could be taken of those other subscriptions and professions? But if any intended these as a trap, contriving them in that form, and with such expressions as were most likely to be refused, and so fittest to ensnare; if they were design'd to be as a distinguishing *Shibboleth*, that they might know whom to fall upon, as a partition wall, to keep off those that may in some punctilio's differ from them as a Test of a Party, which serves to rank men under several divisions. If any in their Im-

positions had such like designs as these; it is not all their power and policy combin'd, that can make such actings pass for current with that God who is a lover of peace. And at length all shall be convinc'd, *That they who break the Peace of the Church, to promote the Peace of a Party, (let that Party be great or little, in favour or disgrace,) are not those Peace-makers upon whom a blessing is pronounced.*

3. I would fain know what disturbance of the Peace there was, whilst the Liberty granted by his Majesties Declaration was enjoyed; and upon what account it was likely to have been more violated, had that Liberty been secured and perpetuated?

4. I am yet to learn how this restraint that is laid upon them, doth any whit the more incapacitate them for interruption of the Peace; if a sense of their duty laid not a stronger obligation on them. Its evident enough that many of them have that influence upon their people, that it was no way difficult for them to lead them into Sects and Separations, if they had a mind to so: and to such provoking pressures upon them, was not the way to prevent such miscarriages. But, blessed be God! their patience and moderation hath prevail'd over the smarting sense of those sufferings, which might have wrought them into extremes. If any have discovered too much impatience and bitterness of spirit, as I excuse it not, so neither are those proceedings which caus'd it, any more justifiable: But for many it hath been their care, according to their capacities, to heal the distempers of their people's spirits, to remove the too great prejudices many have conceived, and to reduce all whom they perceived inclined to a Party: So that I dare confidently say, *They have done more to preserve the peace of the Church, than those who censure them, and cast them out of the Ministry as factious, and unpeaceable. And as for raising any Seditions or Commotions in the State, not their most quick-sighted Adversaries have,* the

I could have no reason, discovered them in the least guilty. And did his Majesty but ever hear in how their daily private prayers to God on his behalf, I am confident he would easily be convinc'd, That his Kingdome holds not more loyal, faithful subjects, than they, however they may be misrepresented, as deserving all that Severity with which they are treated.

By this time, I hope I may on good grounds conclude, That the laying such restraints on so many faithful Ministers, who might have been so eminently serviceable to their Master, is one of those provocations of the Divine Majesty, under the effects whereof we groan; and that therefore those who have been the procurers hereof, ought to lamente their sin, and do their utmost to redress this grievance, and restore that liberty of which their Brethren have been deprived. And if, when his Majesty, out of his gracious Nature, was inclined to have given that Indulgence, which *truly tender Consciences* did strongly hope for, and which would have rejoyc'd the hearts of so many thousands of his best Subjects; if then there were any who *stood in the gap* to prevent the same, as we were publickly told (in those very words) there were; let all such now soberly consider, what a breach they have helpt to make upon us, and by their intercession with his Majesty, for that liberty he is so willing to grant, as by one singular means, let them now stand in the gap and turn away Gods overflowing wrath, that we be not utterly consumed.

And to you, *Reverend Fathers*, the Rulers and Guides of our Church, give me leave to re-inforce my earnest request, in the name of our Common Saviour, That as you value his Blood, and the purchase of it, and the precious souls for whom it was shed, you would yield a gracious Audience to those, who beg of you nothing but a freedome to publish the glad tydings of Salvation by Christ our Redeemer, to the lost Sons of Men. Consider what a reasonable thing it is that is begg'd of you, no

Honors or Preferments, but a liberty to serve your Lord and ours in the work of the Ministry. Look over, I beseech you, your Commission again and again, and see where you are commanded, yea, or allowed to cast off those whom God hath call'd to this work, or keep out those, whom he hath in some measure fitted for, and strongly inclined to it, upon such grounds, & for such reasons, as we are thus deale with. Will you thrust and keep such Labourers out of the Harvest, whom our Lord hath bid us pray might be sent forth into it? Was your power given you to any other purpose, than Edification? O Sirs, what is it you seek? Is it indeed to advance Christ's Interest, to save poor souls from the devouring flames, to set up Holiness, and root out Wickedness? Why then will you remain at a distance from your Brethren, whose very hearts are set upon these works? who had rather than all the Riches and Honours in the world, be made in a capacity of imploying themselves successfully herein? Oh, why will you restrain them from speaking, whose very bowels yearn over poor sinners that are just dropping into the burning Lake, and think not what they are? When the faces of so many thousands gather blackness, and they starve and swoon, and fall in the streets; why do you bind the hands of those who would so fain reach them forth the Bread of Life? when their miseries and necessities cry aloud for help, why do you hinder those who would gladly afford them a seasonable supply? who, though they may imploy themselves according to their opportunities with particular mens souls, yet what's that to the having their Congregations to speak to? Review your patterns, I beseech you, and see whether you find any carriages of theirs, in their ruling of the Church, which may justifie yours. Our blessed Lord would not have those forbid to do Miracles in his Name, who went not with him. Nor doth *Paul* intimate

any

any desire to have silenc'd those who preach Christ out of envy, much less such (had there been any Pastors of that mind) who were not caring of herbs only, not meant. He speaks under the having the mouths of some stopt, Tit. 1. 10. viz. They of the Circumcision, who would have obtruded their Mosaick Ceremonies upon the Christians, and judge whether our cause be like theirs, and yet even their mouths were to be stopt by sound doctrine, and evidence of argument, &c.

Oh how confident should I be of obtaining that liberty I am begging of you (if reasons of another sort hindered not) was Christ himself alive amongst us, or any of the Apostles our Governours. Had I had the happiness to have lived in St. *Paul's* dayes, and addrest my self to him with all humility and earnestness, imploring a leave to preach the Gospel, professing I had no carnal aim in it, but that my soul long'd to be disclosing those mysteries and treasures of love to poor senseless creatures, that were going on to damnation, as not knowing, or considering what Christ had done to keep them thence, and that I would endeavour faithfully to declare the whole Counsel of the Lord, without adding to, or diminishing ought from it; had I made such an address, do you think in your own Consciences, he would have turned me away without my Errand? I have sometimes thought, that should I have put up such a Petition to the King, I should have prevailed; but fears of becoming ridiculous, have deterr'd me.

But let not this my suit, I beseech you be rejected, for what pretence of reason can be alledged against it. Is not I know the things themselves which are required, that you so much stand upon, as if they were in their own Nature necessary antecedently to your Commands. And was ever yet any answer given to those demands which have been made (amongst others) by a person of

that

then judgement and moderation; that you can [illegible]
suspect him of prejudice or inclination to a Party, [illegible]
benefit. What Character Christ hath given the Church [illegible]
himself to more than himself hath done? what [illegible]
threw every Christian should not stand upon the same [illegible]
now, which they did in the time of the said Act, [illegible]
and whether Christ will more thank unto us the [illegible]
keeping such out from Communion with the Church (upon [illegible]
well add from their service of the Church) whom [illegible]
receive into Heaven, and with whom only Grounds of [illegible]
unite, but Articles of those very simple things [illegible]
Negatives you there, that the Communion the Apostles [illegible]
some with, was only to teach what Christ had commanded [illegible]
not the least intimation given of a power in those they [illegible]
else, except what they might be directed to by the immediate [illegible]
guidance of the Spirit of God; and that they needed no [illegible]
dent necessity, either absolute, or for the present state, [illegible]
by ground of imposing their commands; and much more [illegible]
the same purpose: which, however they are regarded [illegible]
may shew thus much. That it is not only Humane and [illegible]
rule of Judgment which judges it most reasonable; that those things [illegible]
which the Defenders of them count indifferencies, should [illegible]
be vigorously imposed on others, or the Peace of the Church [illegible]
suspended upon them. But is it indeed the publick Peace [illegible]
that by these things you consult for? Why will you [illegible]
in the room of a Submission so them, accept of any [illegible]
most Solemn Engagements from those who will [illegible]
into them, that they will not disturb the peace either [illegible]
Church or State? And if you finde any acting contrary [illegible]
ly, proceed against them as you please. Let the World [illegible]
judge what reasonable offers we make. Is it our obedience to Authority you would have us manifest? Why [illegible]
our Submission in all other things speak for us. Or [illegible]
on us what commands you will in Civil things, or in [illegible]
thing that may be no snare to our Consciences, and [illegible]
the

them know whether we be obstinate or not.

In a word, will you accept our Promises, Bonds, Oaths, or what assurance can be desired, That we will labour in all things to all men agreeably to the Gospel of our Lord, which we all own as a sufficient Rule? And that we will not allow our selves in any prejudice, humour, or perverseness, but in all things (though we would not be made one a Rule to another, in matters that will well allow diversity) will comply with them so far as possibly we can, without danger of displeasing God, and damning of our own Souls? And surely you have more tenderness than to desire us to do such things. I am told there is speak in others names (though not one be privy to my work) because I am perswaded there are few but will do thus much, and what can in reason be required more of

Let none usurp the Prerogative of searching hearts, and knowing mens meanings better than themselves, and say, *These are fine words, and specious pretences, but the design of all is, but to get more Liberty to strengthen a Party:* For I solemnly protest, and, Thou God, who standest over me whil'st I am writing these words, know'st it, *I abhor such a design.* If to raise men to the knowledge and love of God through the Spirit of his Son; if to bring them to a careful observance of the precepts of our Lord, that they may be obedient to their Governours, Ecclesiastical and Civil; just and charitable to their Brethren; that they may be holy, humble, heavenly, patient, meek, pure, chaste and temperate; abounding in all the graces and fruits of the Spirit: If this be to make men of a Party, then let me be interpreted as earnestly desirous to promote it, otherwise not. And shall those, who have no other aims than these, be kept out of the Ministry, as turbulent, factious, and schismatical? Yea, some that were not born so soon as our Civil Confusions, and therefore Sided with none, Offended none? If you indeed

deed thought there were any this Innocent, and whose intentions were so upright, would you have no regard to them, but reject all their Petitions, even such as have made? surely you would not. Why be assured, if there may any faith be given to men, and if it be possible for men to know their own hearts, there are some, yea, I am confident, many such. Well, however it is all we may be censured and slandered, yet, whilest we can daily betake our selves to the All-knowing God, and profess before him; that it is the grief of our Souls that we are deprived of those opportunities of serving him, which we once had, or hoped for, which we beg may be restor'd and vouchsafe't rather than any outward advantages whatsoever; and that we had rather serve him in the Ministry, than (for any interest of our own) be made Monarchs of the World; only we dare not pretend Glory to justifie our lye; we dare not (for to him we may speak plainly) say, *We consent to those things as we can finde warrant for from his Word; nor that those who are vowed to reform the Church, are not oblig'd by those Vows* when corruptions are so many and great; but we beseech him to lead us into all Truth, and discover to us our duty; for that hee knows wee would do any thing but sin against him, to purchase a liberty publickly to serve him; and therefore to his righteous judgement we wholly commit our Cause; whilst I say in our daily prayers to God, we can make such Professions as these (and I hope some can) we may possess our souls in patience, and be comforted with the Conscience of our Integrity, whatsoever clamours there are without us, and whatever calumnies men may labour to fasten upon us. And I beseech you, who by your harshness, send such daily to God with tears and groans under their heavy pressures, yea, and Thousands more of the best Christians in the Land on their behalf, and on the behalf of their own souls

so great a measure deprived of the precious quickning means they once enjoyed, bethink your selves how grate- ful these your proceedings are to God; which thus oc- casion the just sorrows and complaints of his Ministers and dearest People?

And let me further put it to your Consciences, whe- ther in your private Addresses to God, you can say, that you are griev'd in heart for your Brethren deprived of their Liberties, and that you have condiscended to them as far as possibly you could without sinning, and as you would do all that in you lies for their restaura- tion, that might not provoke him, and be a burthen to your own Consciences? and that it is the interest of Christ, and the Edification and Salvation of Souls which you aimed at, in your proceedings against them? Can you make such Professions as these to God, or to men, as you will answer it at the great and dreadful day of Account? I leave it to your calm and sober Conside- rations.

I shall no longer stand to importune you; but (as hoping I have not been speaking all this while to the wind) entreat you to take into your serious review, the Petition for Peace, presented to you by the Divines ap- proved by his Majesty, to treat with you about Church- affairs. There may you see what their Requests are, and the pressing Reasons with which they enforce them: Requests so reasonable, That, nothing but sad Experi- ence could have convinced me they were deniable; Rea- sons so evident, that I am perswaded they are unanswe- rable. Now slight not, I beg you, these entreaties, be- cause you can easily deny them: for the cause I plead is just and equal, and of weighty moment, which I re- fer to your impartial debates, and leave the event to the disposure of that God, for whose Honour it was (if I own my self) that I undertook this plea. And him I

shall

shall humbly follow with my prayers, That this [illegible]
cation, which I am writing, [illegible] 24. may [illegible]
his good Providence, and the favour of Authority, [illegible]
something to the reversing of that Act, whose [illegible]
force, took date from This day (three years since) [illegible]
fatal Day that deserves to be wrote in Black Letters [illegible]
England's Calendar.

Grant this, O my God, for thy Son Christ Jesus sake, I [illegible]
beseech thee, and to all that seek thy Glory, and the Prosp[illegible]
of thy Church, say Amen.

If any upon the reading of this, should accuse me either of too great confidence in making such an attempt, or want of judgement to conceive there was any possibility of the success, when much more likely endeavours have been ineffectual; Let such know, That when I designed to do my utmost toward a discovery of our sins, which have provoked Gods anger against us, I should have thought my self unfaithful to the Cause I undertook, had any fear or pretence of Reason prevailed with me, to pass silently over a miscarriage of so great nature, as I have manifested this to be, so fruitful and compleate with, many others. And if any thing unequal be framed by a Law, I hope that straits put no measure of it so far, as to make it above a Subject to call things by their own names. Had an Act pass'd for the toleration of Drunkenness, or any the like sin, I should have taken the boldness to represent the ill nature and consequences of it. And though it is not impossible but prejudice may spy out very great faults, yet I hope, both as to the matter and manner of my Discourse I have not transgress the bounds of sobriety, modesty, and that duty which I owe my Superiours.

Moreover, I conceived, That now God calls us all to search our hearts, and review our wayes; they who themselves put us upon this work, and exhort us to Repentance

...and Pityes, will not be unwilling to reflect upon ...selves and their own actions; as remembring they ...e men subject to the same mistakes and frailties that ...e rest of the Sons of lapst Adam are. And if indeed it ...e made evident, That amongst other Errands, one voice ...f the Rod now upon us, is, *Let my people go, that they ...ay serve me; Let my faithful Ministers have liberty to de-...clare my Gospel.* I hope those, who are particularly cal-...ed to from Heaven, will not be disobedient.

Again, I was willing so far as was consistent with my) ...ain Design, to represent to the World (if any yet be ...ncern'd in it) the nature of the difference betwixt us; ...owever to manifest this much, how willing, yea, how ...arnestly desirous some (if not all) of those suspended ...om their Ministerial Employments, are to be re-ad-...itted to the same; and what reasonable terms they beg, ...nd readily offer a submission to, if they might be heard; ...hat so they, who are so forward to condemn them all as ...bstinate and perverse, may be more wary of their cen-...ures and confine them to those only whom they know ...o guilty.

And I hop'd I might do something to quicken all those, ...hose hearts are affected with the Concernments of the ...hurch, to more earnestness in their Addresses to God, ...hat he, in whose hands the heart of Kings and all men ...re, would incline our Superiours to hearken to the Re-...quests, and graciously to regard the Cause of so many of ...he Servants of Christ, who, when his Church so much ...eeds their labours, and they would so willingly spend ...emselves in the service of Souls, are to the sadning of ...eir hearts, in a great measure rendered unserviceable ...n their Generations.

And lastly, Thus much however I shall attain, *viz.* the ...atisfaction of my Conscience in the discharge of my ...Duty, that I can herein approve my self to God and

my

my own Soul, that I have done what in me lies, [illegible] that preaching of my own and others Liberty; that, [illegible] shall be deemed, I may have nothing to charge [illegible] self with in this respect, and may comfort my self in [illegible] that the improvement of such a Liberty, shall no [illegible] be required of mee, by the righteous Judge of Hea[illegible] and Earth, than the improvement of a great Estate, [illegible] a place of Honour, or some such Talent, with which was never entrusted. And if I obtain but thus [illegible] (though I strongly hope for more) I shall be fa[illegible] rapencing of my undertaken labour; for I must con[illegible] that seems not to me a small thing, which may way [illegible] ducethto my having of boldness before my Lord, at [illegible] day of his appearing.

A word or two more I shall take liberty to add [illegible] this Head, before I relinquish it. *If the removal of fo[illegible] ous Labourers out of the Lords Harvest, is so grievous a [illegible] both in it self, and all the sad consequences of it, then all th[illegible] and even they themselves, so far as they have contributed [illegible] their removal, or have not since endeavoured to prevent [illegible] consequences, have cause to be greatly humbled.*

And first, Even all the People who have sinned [illegible] Teachers into corners, by their Pride, Wantonness, [illegible] Unfruitfulness under the Means of Grace: But espe[illegible] ally, those private persons, who by their malice either did, or at least endeavoured to contribute to their ejec[illegible] on, or to the hastning of it. What Volumns might [illegible] composed (even another Book of Martyrs, or Confes[illegible] rather) of the sufferings many of these Servants of Ch[illegible] have met with, from the Arbitrary violence of unreaso[illegible] able men? For I speak not of what the Law hath impo[illegible] sed on them. How have some been toss't from place [illegible] place, their Houses searched, and they confined, and [illegible] this either upon groundless suspition, or false accusa[illegible] ons; for where was the man of them, that hath yet be[illegible]

[illegible] prov[illegible]

proved guilty of Treason or Sedition? Oh the notorious gross lies and perjuries, that some of their people have been guilty of both before, and since their ejection?

And yet how readily accepted by many? And what's the ground of all? Why, alas, they had gotten many Hearers, the Great-ones especially, who were scandalized at the Strictness of their Doctrines and Lives, and angry that they might not go to Hell quietly, who studied to be revenged on them for the disturbance they had received from them in their sins. Thus I dare confidently say, it hath been with many. And though such may have thought they have been doing God good service, whilst they have been persecuting his Ministers; yet believe it, they shal have smal thanks from him that sent them upon that Errand, the delivery whereof may have brought them so much trouble; and that they shall finde to their smart without true repentance, if many of them have not already. What, could not men bee content to reject the Embassie God sent them, but they must injure and abuse his Embassadors too? Shall not God proclaim war against that people that have thus violated the Law of Nations? They would scarce have done thus to an Embassador sent from the Turk, to perswade us to exchange Christ for *Mahomet*, and the Gospel for the *Alcoran*. But, oh, let them alone, they are safe enough. 'Tis the *Factious Non-conformist*, not the *Christian Minister* they have meddled with. Not the Holy Jesus, who came from Heaven to bring men thither, was Crucified; but (if you will believe his Adversaries) *an enemy to Cæsar, and a mover of Sedition*; not *Paul* a Servant and Worshipper of the most High God, but *a certain pestilent Fellow, a Ringleader of a Sect*, was accused. The World hath still some Policy and Modesty in drawing up its Indictments, and dare not directly make Holiness a Crime. Well, Sirs, it will bee happy for you, if you

shall be found to have had so much wit in your anger, as that you shall at last be able to distinguish your selves out of Gods displeasures: but if there should be any thing found in *Christianity*, engaging to that you call *Non-conformity*; or if you have made this but a pretence for your Malignity against that, I would not for a thousand worlds be in your case, for all your distinctions, when God shall arise thorowly to plead his peoples Cause. And even now sure he is beginning to do it. And if under the Rod, you continue the sin for which you are lasht, bethink you how to answer that startling Question, *Who ever hardned himself against God, and prosper'd?* And justly hath God suited his Judgements to this sin of the people. A Famine of the Word they feared not, and therefore may God have sent upon thousands what they accounte more dreadful, a Famine of Bread. 'Tis just that they who loath'd the Manna, and were weary of the Bread of Life, should want bread to put into their mouths. And they who could not endure these terrible Preachers, let them now speak, whether the Threatning, or the Execution, be the more terrible? Now, Sirs, what say you to sin? Is it such a harmless thing as you thought, or not? Doth not God now speak against it, in something a louder and harsher Language, than your bawling Preachers were wont? Under them you could sleep, but now sleep away this Sermon if you can, even this awakening Sermon, which the Plague of God makes to you. And if you go on in your hardness, you shall find to your cost, that the Hell and Damnation which their Pulpits did so thunder against wickedness, was but a painted fire, to that you shall eternally feel.

But from others who have been the unjust causes of your sufferings, to your selves I shall address my self, *Honoured Fathers, and Dear Brethren*, with whom my boldness will not, I am confident, be misconstrued. Since

since you will readily acknowledge, that all that hath befalln you, is just, as from God, you cannot then but lay it on your sins; and these, I hope, it is your daily business to reflect on, and beg pardon for. Though I am well assur'd the holiness, diligence and painfulness of many of you hath been such, that to men you may well acquit your selves, and may be worthy patterns to others, and shame and silence your accusers; yet to God you cannot so readily justifie your selves, I know you dare not. Oh! might you not have done more to promote the interest of your Lord and Master, than you did? Some of you I mean, for I profess without all partiality or flattery, I think some did strive to the very utmost of their power, to improve all opportunities for the good of Souls, and now in their Consciences they have the fruits of it; but of these there were few, too few. O be humbled then for all your Negligence, Covetousness, and self-seeking, your Pride and Contentions; that you were more averse from the offers of Peace and Union, than you ought; that you kept so much ado about your own waies and opinions, and stood wrangling about this Trifle, or that; whil'st greater works were left undone: And daily make Solemn Engagements to God, that if once more he will entrust you with forfeited priviledges, you will be more faithful and vigorous than ever yet you have been, in the work of the Gospel; that you will no more take your ease, nor seek your selves, nor waste precious time in needless Controversies; not confine godliness to any without-book niceties of your own, nor lay the Peace of the Church upon your particular Opinions, but will readily joyn with all that are willing, in the owning and pressing only the things that are necessary to Salvation; and will use all means both publick and private, for the conversion of souls. And if God grant your prayers, as in his due time hee may, see that you remember these promises.

But 'tis the second branch I would have you chiefly to consider, and that is, *your not endeavouring what you might to prevent some of those sad consequences of your exclusion, which I before mentioned*, in that you have not embrac't all the opportunities that were yet afforded you, for the doing good to the people, to bring them from sin to God, and so your negligence may have hastened and help't forward Gods indignation. Let me not be thought too sawcy, Sirs, I beseech you, for in the same plain dealing I have used hitherto, I am resolved to conclude. I must needs say then, if they are not to be excused who have deprived you of your publick Liberty, no more are you, if you have not improved that private Liberty they left you for doing your Masters work. I must profess it hath troubled me, to hear men pray so earnestly, and talk so much for the Restauration of their Liberty, and to see them make so little use of that the Law allows them. And it might too much tempt men to fear, that their Secular interests went nearest to their hearts, and that they chiefly mean a Liberty to receive their maintenance again, to live, they and their Families at their former Rates, or to be able to insult over, and give Law to those in the Church, who now trample upon, and despise them. I know *Daily bread* may be pray'd for, but the *Coming of Gods Kingdome* must have the priority, both in our prayers and endeavours.

The Case is weighty, Sirs, and deserves your serious consideration. To go and preach the Gospel you entered into an Engagement, and received a Commission, the validity whereof (though to some of you given, by the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery only) I suppose you question not, nor I think scarce any one else, till very lately. Well, it being thus, I would know how you can shift off the necessity that lyes upon you to preach this Gospel, and the Woe in case of your negligence,

genee. You may reply, *You have no Lands given you, nor yet any maintenance allowed.* But pray you, Who gave the Apostles and Primitive Christians leave for three hundred Years after Christ, and who maintain'd them? Where was such a Clause inserted in your Commission, *Always provided that the Rulers of the World give you leave to perform your Duties?* This would agree with the Policies of that Gentleman, who being, I fear, design'd to take God out of the World, in courtesie to us, somewhat to prevent our confusion, would set up Monarchs little less limitted than Hee. But if our Ancestors had gone by this Rule, where had the Gospel been? or where is it excepted, *That you must have such and such provisions, or else not to Preach?* For my own part, I acknowledge my self a very mean Casuist, and ignorant of Twenty subtle distinctions here, which might bee needful. And I am very confident, I am speaking to few, but are more knowing, and better studied in this point, than my self; and great difficulties there are to me, concerning the relation betwixt a Pastor, and a People, as matters now stand with us; how far it holds, and how far men are engaged to perform all the duties of that relation; wherefore to that I shall say little or nothing; only so far as concerns my self, and very many more, yea, all in part, I use thus plainly to resolve the case to my self; when my understanding is most help't, by a powerful apprehension of death and judgement near at hand.

I take it for the indispensable duty of every man, to imploy himself to the utmost in his place and calling, in answering the ends of his Creation and Redemption, the glorifying of God, in doing his best to save his own, and others Souls. And if I have been Solemnly Consecrated to this work, to make it my very particular Calling, no command of the highest Emperour in the World can disoblige me from it: God must be honoured, the Gospel

proclaimed, Souls saved, my Vows performed, &c. and rage, forbid and hinder it, who will or can. But if there happen such terms to bee put upon me, as the condition of my more open exercise of the Function I am devoted to, which terms, after the use of all due means for Information. I judge I cannot lawfully submit to, but yet others will, whose apprehensions vary from mine, who will in some competent measure carry on the Publick work I was employed in, which I am forbid to meddle with: Then, in such a case, (which, if I mistake not, is ours) I will cast about which way I may do most, for those ends I am obliged to carry on. And since Christianity it self is not forbid to be preach'd, only I must not do it, *viz.* not publickly; but yet others will, and in many places do: And I foresee, that by relying upon the publick Preaching, more hurt would come of my disobedience, than good; and I should be more out of a capacity for future Service, either by Imprisonment, Banishment, or the like (which are not so much to bee shunn'd as Sufferings, but as they hinder the attainment of my ends) I will then see what private opportunities are afforded me for those ends, and them with all readiness I will accept, and diligently improve as in which, all circumstances considered, I may do most for the advancement of the Gospel: And therefore is not to be thought an effect of Cowardize, a baseness unworthy him that remembers what it sounds to bee a *CHRISTIAN*; but as my taking that way which conduceth most to Gods glory, and the Interest of Religion.

But if Circumstances should so alter the case, that I see, venturing upon publick Preaching be the most probable way for the accomplishment of my just designs, then I will embrace that: Or if I should bee forbid privately to endeavour the Salvation of Souls, then

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I must and will disobey, let what will bee the events; because such commands directly contradict those ends I must promote, and leave me no way for the attaining of them: Yea, though I dye for it, I must tell those within my reach, who gave us our Being, and keeps us alive, and to what end; who shed his blood for us, and why, and what we must do to be made partakers of the benefits he hath purchased: I must tell them of the evil and danger of sin, whither it leads, and what an Heaven holiness will end in. These are matters that the world must know, though a thousand deaths attend upon the Publishers: And I would no longer care for a tongue or hand, than whilst I might speak or write of them. One word more, and I shall conclude this: But it so happening since the loss of my Liberty, that my self, and those that depend on me, may be reduc't to such pressing necessities, that I must be taken up much more than I was wont, some way or other, for the procuring of a Livelihood (the sad case at present, of many precious, eminent Ministers) then I will betake my self to such care and pains as is requisite hereto; in the mean time not relinquishing my great Work, but regarding the world, as all ought to do, (and indeed the most of what I have said, is applicable to private Christians) only with a subserviency to it. And this we may finde justified by *Paul* himself, whom, if you had found busie at work in making his Tents, yet you could not have charged him with neglect of the Gospel; for even then hee was contriving how to render it most acceptable.

And thus I have given in my brief thoughts of this Case, which, though it may seem a digression from the matter in hand, yet is it not so from my main design, if it may do the least to quicken any to a sense of their duty, and the neglects of it, and to put them upon more carefulness for the future. And hence many may see,

how guilty they have been, in not laying out themselves for the good of Souls, so far as they might, without breaking any Law, or running any hazard. Oh Sirs, you men sure somewhat sensible of what worth a Soul is: and what weighty things Salvation and Damnation are, which careless wretches do but jest with, as words of course. Why have you not then laboured more in these matters? Let none mis-understand me, I speak to the negligent only. Could we have done no more for God and mens souls, to inform the ignorant, convince the obstinate, quicken the godly, than we have done? Might there not have been, through the blessing of God even upon our private labours fewer to provoke, and more to please him, more to strive with him by their prayers to turn away his wrath, than there are?

And upon the same account, *I would beg all private Christians to lay to heart their lamentable dulness, and unfruitfulness in the Places and Towns where they dwell.* Oh how little are their Neighbours and Acquaintance, I wish I might not say their Families, better for many of them? So little do they make Religion their business: but in their converse are even like other men; only plodding on in a life-less Profession, and track of Duties, and appearing a little zealous for some By-opinions of their own. It was time for them to bee raised out of their heavy, luke-warm temper, and to bee made to mind and relish a little more the weighty truths and matters of Religion. Reader, Art thou an Honourer of Christ and a Lover of Mankinde? Why tell me then, is it not a most lamentable thing to consider, That almost all the World, yea, almost all the Christian, and Reformed Christian World, is drowned in Wickedness; and that there is so little Savoury Salt in it; so few that study and labour to make the Gospel obtain amongst men, in the life and power of it? How do the most seek their own things?

things? How few the things of Jesus Christ? Oh that men were once throughly perswaded, that his things were theirs! Some are too busie about Puppet-plaies, the petty trifles of the World (which, yet to those, who are swallowed up in them, seem weighty and important) to minde much what becomes of mens immortal Souls. Let the poor Curate, that must live by it, see to such low affairs. Others have so much to do to keep up their own Parties, Opinions and Customes, That Christ may look to his Gospel himself for them, except as it lies in the way to the things they account most their Concern. But all you the Ministers of Christ, if indeed you take his work it self for your Honour, Pleasure and Wages, though many of you may want those encouragements which are so requisite and desirable for your success; yet, bee awakened to do all the service you can to your Lord and Master. Let us not stand accusing any for the removal of our opportunities, whilest wee have so many before us, if wee had the hearts and skill to use them. How glad would the Primitive Christians, or our Protestant Martyrs have been of those Priviledges wee enjoy, though they might have earnestly desired more? What Sirs, are there no poor souls near you, that cry aloud for your help, to save them from the burning lake, to rescue them out of the jaws of Death, and snares of the Devil, by whom they are led captive at his will? These, these are they upon whom especially you ought to imploy all your skill and pains, and from him that died for them, you shall have your reward. I know the Godly also call for strengthning, direction, comfort and quickning; but surely your principal (much less your only) Work is not with them; the miserable Creatures that are just at the Graves mouth, and yet know not what they came into the World for, require speedy and seasonable help. Oh how many Thou-

sands

ſands now may bee out of your reach, whom you might have ſpoken to, but did not! Who hinders from going to ſuch, and diſcourſing to them the matters that concern their everlaſting Peace? Cannot you watch opportunities when they can beſt have while hear you, and are moſt likely to regard you? You live amongſt your former People, cannot you go to their Houſes, and take all occaſions of converſe with them and be inculcating on them the great Truths and Duties of the Goſpel? If you never formerly took this course of private dealing with your People, ſet upon it now, as you know not but it may be more effectual than all your former labours were. Some that have tryed, have had good ſucceſs. However, you will have comfort in doing your Duty. Oh go often, as you have time, among your poor Neighbours, and ſee in what a ſtate their ſouls are; and be not ſo uncharitable and hard hearted as to ſee them dropping into Hell, and yet do nothing to prevent it. Though 'tis amongſt Strangers you are caſt, yet acquaint your ſelves with them, and do them all the good you can, as knowing every man's ſoul his Neighbour that needs your help. Put them upon reading good Books, and take account of them, and learn what their knowledge in Religion is, and according inſtruct and adviſe them.

But far bee it from me, to preſume to give direction for the Work: others have done it fully, and you know well enough, if you would but ſet to it with all your might, oh follow then the example of *Paul*, who went about from houſe to houſe, night and day, warning and beſeeching every one with tears. What, do you think this is not preaching the Goſpel? Do you think that's onely, whilſt you ſtand on a high place in the midſt of an Aſſembly? Did not Chriſt preach the Goſpel to a woman alone; and *Philip* to the Eunuch? In ſome reſpects 'tis evident perſonal di-

discourse hath much the advantage of publick preachings; and why may we not expect Gods blessing hereupon, as well as on the other? Now Sirs, we have an happy opportunity of discovering what pure love to the Gospel will do with us, without any hopes of a Temporal reward. What moved you to preach to your people before? I know you will not joyn with the Quakers in accusing your selves and say, it was for your Tythes. What then, was it a desire to save the souls of your people? Why, I hope their Salvation is as precious in your eyes now, as then; and do not they as much need your assistance? Why then do not you continue it? Say not, the people will not bear it, for many will. Try them once again, and where any are obstinate, let your love and courtesie do its utmost to overcome them. Oh let us but work our own hearts into lively affectionate apprehensions of the great concernments of Souls, and study more what God is, and why he made us; what the death of Christ imports, what it is for a soul to be saved or damned for ever; and we shall scarce be able to refrain speaking to all we can light upon; but we shall rather ask every man we meet, whether he hath yet done his best to make sure his everlasting happiness? whether he's yet got from under the wrath of God, and out of danger of Hell? These things will be ready to burst from us in the very streets, or open Congregations. Oh had we but that zeal, and those affections which these matters deserve, and will very well warrant, what work might we make in the world, yet keeping in all due bounds of sobriety and prudence? Though perhaps we might be counted mad-men for our pains, as Christ himself and the Apostle Paul were. But remember then, I would have you spend your zeal upon the things that are worth it; proportion it to the weight of the truths you insist on. I would not have you take this pains to make men of your opinion in controverted matters. Beware of that, designing a Party

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ey will spoil all your work. Labour you to make
Members of Christ, what need you care then what p
culiar Church they are members of, or wherein they
from you, in matters that concern not their Salva
Do the best you can to heal all breaches, make none,
den none. Let men censure us as long as they will for S
malleal and Turbulent; and if all our professions to
Contrary may not be heard, yet let our practises wi
to God, to the world, and to our own Consciences, tha
are true lovers of Piety and Peace. See that you hav
other aims but Gods Glory, and hee'l own, and C
you for your labour of Love. Say not now, this is a
cult work, but tell me whether it be not needful? I
Devil and his Instruments sit still, then do you so too:
member what a Covenant you made in Baptism, beside
other Engagements since.

Think what you live for, and where you expect to
shortly, and tell me whether a life this laid out for C
will not then be your comfort? Oh for the Lords sake
all you his servants up and be doing, and fear not:
God will be with you, what are you afraid of enem
Do you think this will procure you more hatred and
ferings? And awaken powers to greater jealousies,
cause them to abridge you of the Liberty yet reserved,
ver fear it, Sirs, why don't you know what I am pres
you to? It is to propagate Christianity; and this is a w
that must and shall bee done: for God hath said it,
hee'l see to it; and for this the World is yet kept up.
Sirs, pure, simple, and uncorrupted Christianity, deserv
all our time and study, and pains to advance it. And
hath such Comforts and Crowns, for its resolved friend
and persecuted followers, that would make a man eve
long to be suffering for it; and the more he suffers, th
more he will still love, the firmlier adhere to it. Christi
nity, it is a Religion of that force and excellency, that
defies

lesses oppositions, and scorns all banks and bounds. Is any
s greatest Adversaries, and a Prisoner at the Bar with it,
ay make his Judge upon the Bench to tremble, and the
urdy Jaylor that even now whips him, come quaking to
s a Pardon. Fear not Prisons, for the Gospel can never
e bound. Let this alone be your Rule, and value not
hat Law or will of man shall contradict it. Kings and
mperours with all their Officers and Armies, Edicts and
horities, are but Trophee's to its Power: like dams
ey'l make it rise the higher, and over-bear all before it;
xperience confirms what I say. This Cake of barly-bread
ill tumble down all the Tents of a Midianitish Host;
e noise of its Trumpets, the light of the Lamps (though
e Pitchers that bear them, these earthen vessels our bo-
es be broken) and crying out; *The Word of the Lord,*
d his Son Christ Jesus, will discomfit innumerable Ar-
ies, and make them run, and cry, and flee. This is the
ospel, and let all that read these lines say, *Let it go on*
d Prosper, let it run and be glorified, and strike its healing
ord to the hearts of its adversaries. Now this is it, and
is alone, which I would beseech all to spend themselves
r, and fear not but it will bear your charges. Let your
ork be purely Gods, and if he can bear you out he will;
nd I hope you don's doubt that. But let me once again
g you, to see that you make the cause you work for, the
me that Christ and his Apostles drove on in the world,
nd then how joyfully may you suffer for it, whatever
en call your actions and designs. 'Tis nothing strange to
ffer for Christ from nominal Christians; nor for Peace
nd Truth, from men that call themselves Orthodox
nd Catholick; this hath been often in the world! Let
en the weighty, but much neglected Doctrines and
ommands of the Gospel be urged with all earnestness,
nd lesser things less regarded. Talk less of the Times,
nd more of Eternity. Stand not discoursing who should

have

have power in the Church to men, that are yet ... the power of the Devil; not of a Ceremony or F... Prayer, to those that know not God, nor their own ... What strange things would these be to Christ... Heathen in; and are they much fitter for carnal ... But oh labour to work men into the true temper and ... rit of Religion, which consists so much in love to ... and our Brethren; and then the new nature that ... deem, the inward relish of their Souls, and ... Principles of light, will enable them to judge of ... that differ, and all matters of moment God will ... to them.

Again, I have need to request, that I be not ... immodest, if the confused haft I now write in, have ... ried me out to a more than seemly earnestness; ... count me Pragmatical for venturing thus to advise, ... I desire no more regard than what the reasonable ... and weight of the things proposed, shall be found ... serve.

And thus at length, through Gods assistance, I ... ven come to the end of my task. I have endeav... to shew wherein it is, wee have from the highest ... lowest done amiss, and provoked God against us. I ... also mingled Directions, so far as my intended br... would permit, for the performance of those duties, ... may appease his wrath, and make us happy in his ... vour.

And oh that these weak endeavours might have ... issue answerable to their Design! then how confid... durst I say, we should be an happy people, by beco... holy, which is all I have aimed at. But what talk I of ... endeavours? What shall be now the issue of Gods J... ments that have been upon us? Shall we be bettered ... them, or not? Oh! one would think there should be ... an obstinate sinner left in the Nation after this!

we should all with one consent return to God who
hath smitten us, from whom we have back-slidden? One
would think we should now imitate the Children of Is-
rael, whom after Eminent Judgements we finde entring
into Covenant, to seek and serve the Lord their God,
which their Kings were wont to call them. And oh
that God would put it into the heart of his Majesty, to en-
gage all his people even from one end of the Land to the
other, to enter into such a solemn vow, *That we will in
all things be careful to walk in those waies: God hath enjoyned
us, and not in any thing voluntarily break his holy Law?*
So that some such an Engagement was made the Bond
of our Union, our entrance into, and observance of it,
the condition of our Church-Communion? Of what a
blessed consequence would even this be? But this and
all other such great wishes, let us reserve for our prayers;
and give me leave with some jealousie to demand, Whe-
ther all that God hath done, shall be lost upon us? What
shall our Nation still be drowned in sin? So soon as e-
ver the Rod's from off us, shall we to our old course a-
gain? Shall Prophaneness abound, and Religion be de-
cried again? Shall Taverns, and Brothel-houses, and
Play-houses be frequented, and Gods Worship slighted,
and neglected again? Will the abominable and filthy be
as full? shall Blasphemy, and Swearing, and Cursing, be
as loud as ever? Will men again to the world, and their
pleasures, as busily as ever? and make as light of his
threatnings and Promises, and laugh at the talk of
Death and Judgement, as they were wont to do? Shall
God still be mock't with Formalities, and dishonoured
by mens lives? Will the Hater of Godliness still rise
higher in his rage? Will the execution of Justice be as much
neglected as ever? And will the man of Violence swell
his Fingers into Loyns, and exchange his Rods for Scor-
pions? Will men still close their eyes against the clear-
est

eſt light, and reject the apparent and only means for reconciling our differences, and eſtabliſhing our peace upon ſure foundations? Or will they yet ſtrive to aggravate the bitterneſs of mens ſpirits, and purſue their deſign of cruſhing them into the very dirt? Shall we yet rent and torn with animoſities and diviſions? And ſhall they that ought to cure, keep up and increaſe the wound? Shall we ſtill, inſtead of accuſing our ſelves and ſins, employ our Pens and Tongues in Gall, and cry out, one ſide of the *Tyrannical, Cruel and Oppreſſive*; the other, of *Murmurers, Male-contents, and Fault-finders*? Will this and all other diſorders be ſtill continued? Oh God forbid that ſo ſhould be thus, that wee ſhould grow worſe under the Phyſicians hand, and that none of his ſtrong Medicines ſhould work? Shall we cauſe God to complain of us, *That he would have healed us, but we would not be healed? That in vain hath he ſmitten us, for that we will not receive correction?* Oh that ſuch a poor Worm as I could do any thing to prevent ſuch a ſad concluſion! Oh wo to us, if God depart from us, leaving us to our ſins, reſolving to ſtrike us no more, but letting us alone till he deſtroy us in our ſins. My words are like to fly but a little way, but oh that they might have ſome effect where they light.

To thee, *Reader*, let me betake my ſelf: What have the workings of thy Soul been, whilſt thou haſt been reading theſe lines? And what influence have they upon thee? What, hath not thy Conſcience ſmote thee? ſpoken the truth, and told thee plainly, *Thou haſt been a Troubler of the Land, and haſt help'd to bring the Plague upon us?* In the ſight of God, I demand of thee, *Haſt thou not been guilty of ſome of the ſins here deſcribed, Coveteouſneſs, or Pride, Luxury or Oppreſſion, or the like?* And what now? doſt thou not condemn thy ſelf for thy folly? Wilt thou make all ſpeed to get a peace confirmed betwixt God and thy ſoul; and

a separation made betwixt thy soul and sin? Or on the other hand, Art thou not in a rage, that thy sin hath been too plainly displayed, and too much disgrac'd? Thy Darling sin which thou are resolved to keep, though thou have Hell with it? Art thou not framing excuses, and saying: *Thou canst not believe that such and such things which thou hast a minde to, are such heinous matters, and so displeasing to God?* Or else art thou remiss and stupid, never thinking about that, only tossing over the Book, and passing thy censure on it, and throwing it down without any more regard? Truly, this is it I most fear; for this is the general prevailing temper: Oh therfore that I could but rouze thee to an apprehension of thy self, and thy own estate. Reader, sure thou art one that wouldst not willingly be damned; wilt thou then hearken to a most reasonable requeſt I shall make to thee, before I conclude? Thou haſt now been a while reading these Lines, which have been as a Bill of Indictment against our Land, and have deciphered what our especial crying sins are. Wilt thou now when thou shut'ſt the Book, get alone, and spend but as much time in reading thy own heart and life, and search and see whether none of these sins be thine? It may be this is a work thou never didſt in thy life yet, but wilt thou now bring thy heart to it? 'Tis in vain to ask thee, whether thou wilt forsake thy sin, if thou wilt not set upon examining thy self to finde it out. What say'ſt thou then in the Name of God to this my earneſt Requeſt? What, shall I be denied? Is it a great matter I ask of thee, to withdraw thy self from the noiſe and buſle of the World, and of thy own vain thoughts, and to make a diligent search into the ſtate of thy own soul, that being sensible of thy sin and danger, thou may'ſt yet get help? Wilt thou do thus much, or tell me plainly, *Hell shall be damn'd first!* For I assure thee, thy Damnation is never like to be prevented without serious Consideration, and that's it I

would beg these to [illegible] set upon thy Duty, or be secure upon still? Sure mindes cannot but answer one way or other. Reader awakened, take not these for words of course; from I speak to thee, 'tis God to whom thou knowest thoughts and intentions of thy heart, upon thy re these demands. And whatever conviction take, thus thou wilt examine thy self, and forsake thy sin not, yet thou canst not say but God hath given fair Warning. He now stands over thee with his in his hand, and asks thee, *Whether yet thou wilt seek forsake him?*

If thy Self-examinations shal have made way to such a demand, I would know in the next place, *whether thou wilt forsake sinne, or sinne forsake thee, or thou not? Art thou yet willing to be reconciled to God?* is known to thee, *oh Sinner!* whoever thou art, yet there hopes from the Lord thy Maker and Redeemer, I ever for. What would the Damned give for such a Without wilfull impiety confesse thy wiles, be thy sin and trouble is, thou frosty, and flings thee wo the Lord thy God who shall thy heart, willingness his in and through his Son, leaning upon a cruelty of fa holiness, and consulting thereto to the end; doing be assured thy soul shall live. Something of this I s at the beginning, and cannot find so fit word to it no hard, nor enough to inforce it. (If thou knowest it what thy duty is? But are you willing to perform it? C would desire that shall not down to be resolved what to The question is, *whether thou wilt do thy utmost to change thy heart and life, that thou mayest be saved? Or whether thou wilt go on in sin, and be damned?* I have told thee upon what terms thou may'st yet escape thy ruine; but what know? Think that thou dost speedily, or perhaps not all? If thou dost yet one hour thou may'st be in hell for

beth. God hath born with thee long, now he is making
short work: he will not alwaies wait for nothing. Thy
heart quickly he demands, this he will have, or thy heels

Away with thy sin then with all possible speed; if thou
canst not, it will be thy death; for a Hue and Cry's gone
out from Heaven against it, and the man in whose hand
'tis found, shall surely dye: Then cast it away, if thou
lovest thy life, thy everlasting life.

But whatart thou one of those senseless, brutish, block-
headed, that a man had almost as good spend his breath
upon a stone wall, as talk to thee? Art thou nothing mov-
ed with all thou readest or hearest, but takest all for words
of course, which thou forgettest as soon as the noise is out
of thy ears? Dost thou now lay aside the Book, and go a-
bout thy wonted business, as if thou hadst not been read-
ing for Life or Death? But a kinde of story, that no way
concerns thee? Wilt thou now rise up, and go to thy
worldly cares, thy Company, or vain Discourse, instead of
going alone to God with humble acknowledgements of
thy sin, and earnest cries for mercy? If thou wast infect-
ed with the Plague, and hadst been reading what Medi-
cines thou shouldest use, wouldst thou lay by the Book,
and never minde more, as if thou hadst done enough to
read them, without taking care to apply them? And wilt
thou now bee guilty of a madness as much greater than
that, as sin and Hel, are worse than the Plague and Death?
Art thou resolved though Christ himself should kneel to
thee, and beseech thee (as he doth by me) to search thy
heart, and review thy waies, and detest thy sins, that hee
might save thee, that yet thou wouldest not grant his de-
sire; nor ever put thy self to so much Labour as Con-
fession will cost thee? If thou be such a stupid, resolved
sinner, that wilt remain in thy old waies, come on it
what will; yea, and believest all shall be well enough

with thee for all that, what can I say to thee more? C
be judge between thee and me; Thou art destroyed, n
because thou couldest have no help, nor because it w
not offered thee, but because thou didst wilfully refu
it. But, poor Creature, my heart even akes for thee
and loath I am to leave thee in this wretched, dull, d
straited temper; wherein if Death, that is now so bu
abroad, should finde thee, thou art undone for eve
Oh that yet I could speak something that would ma
thee feel and fear. Tell mee then, thou who art no
so bold and resolute, so sottish and careless, Dost tho
not think thou shalt dye? Why, what wilt thou do then
Think on it, and think again, I beseech thee. Is it no
great odds, but the Contagion may shortly reach thee
What course wilt thou then take, when thou shalt fe
the Tokens of God upon thee? Which way wilt tho
look, or what wilt thou do for help? Then go to th
sins thou hast loved so dearly, and see what comfor
they will afford. Now call for a Cup, or a Whor
Never bee daunted man, Shall one of thy coura
quail, that couldst have mockt at the Threatnings of th
Almighty God! What so boon and jolly but now, an
now down ith' mouth? Here's a sudden change indeed
Where are thy Companions? All fled? Where are th
darling-pleasures? All forsaken thee! What will th
Bags, and Bills, and Bonds, do thee no good? Wh
shouldest thou bee dejected? Thou art a man of Wor
ship, perhaps a Lord, or a Knight, or Gentleman; p
chear thy self, review thy good Purchases, think of th
high Titles, and rich Revenues! Go Gallants, get t
your Glass; Powder and Curle, Paint and Spot, Dre
and Adorn you, as you were wont? What, do yo
take no pleasure to view your Pale faces? Do your hearts
sink within you like a stone? Why how now poor crea
ture, what hath the World left thee? The World tho
didst

didst so dearly love, that Heaven was but a trifle to it? What hast thou misplac't thy heart on a treacherous Friend, that fails thee in thy greatest need? Must thou now all in silence and sadness groan forth thy wretched Soul into another world? Now, now wretch, what hath thy sin and carelessness brought thee to? Now where is thy life of mirth and sport? What wilt thou do now, when thy own comforts have left thee, and God loathe thee, and casts out thy Death-bed howlings with disdain? What dost begin to call upon him now? Dost think a few good words shall serve thy turn? Read *Jer.* 2. 28. *Go get thee to thy own Gods, see whether they can help and deliver thee.* Say not I would drive thee to despair; no, I would fain prevent it, and so may'st thou, if thou wilt but hearken in time, and that time's just now: for Death is even at thy back, and perhaps will take thee up as soon as the Book's laid down.

But perhaps thou art one that think'st thy self safe, and that this nothing belongs to thee, because thou may'st bee recovered from the sickness, or got out of the reach of it; or it may bee so abated, that thou dost not fear it, and therefore thou art ready foolishly to cry out with *Agag*, *the bitterness of death is past*; but oh bee convinc't of thy lamentable sottishness; for thou may'st yet bee hewn in peeces for all that. Read *Amos* 9. 1, 2, 3, 4. And tell me whether God will not finde thee out. Thou art run away from the City perhaps, but not from thy sin; and therefore thou carriest the Plague along with thee, which sooner or later will break out. But though thou escape the Plague, art thou then secure? If thou canst but out-live the Mortality, dost thou think all is well then? All danger over? No, hold there, Sinner; God hath not done with thee so, beleeve it, the worst is yet to come. Alas, man, Death, Judgement

and Hell are behinde still: But coming they are upon thee, and overtake thee at last they will, even all of them, if thou look not about thee in time. Patch and Piece up thy moulding Carkass as long as thou canst; and shift thee hither and thither, from this disease or that; but after all be assured; *Thou shalt dye.* And after Death hath done its work upon thee, and the Judgement past and Sentence Executed, if thou then finde all well with thee, boast and spare not; but till then, be silent. But if yet thou art fully bent to keep thy sin, let me beg this to think a little; what is that Hell thou art leaping into. Oh think what the wrath, the burning unquenchable wrath of God is. Dost thou make a jeast at it? 'Tis because thou art an Infidel, or have lost thy wits. I know thou canst not have while to think of it now, thou hast pleasanter things to take up thy thoughts, than Death and Hell: and therefore thou laughest and singest, and merrily throwest away thy hours, as if no hurt was near thee, whilst thou standest tottering on the very brink of the bottomless pit! And all this while, how many Devils whom thou seest not, stand some gaping to receive thee, and some labouring to make thee sure, and thrust thee on? And multitudes of Deaths are waiting for a Commission, any one of them to thrust thee in, and then farewel all hope for ever. Oh spend but one hour, or half an hour in a day, in the sober thoughts of Eternity, and go on in sin, if thou canst. Good Reader, I leave to entreat thee to this course, but if thou tryest, Thou hast somewhat else to do: Know, thou shalt shortly have nothing else to do, but to feel that which now thou will not be brought to think of, that thou mightest avoid it: and then say, if thou hadst not good counsel given thee once, if thou hadst had the wit and the grace to take it. One moments experience shall at length convince thee more, than all thy hearing or reading would. Thou counsel

Plague,

...ague, Famine and Sword, Earthquakes, Thunder and ...ghtning) terrible things: Oh then what's Hell, the ...dregs, the Ocean of that fury, of which these are ...small drops! There it is that God will make the ve... power of his wrath intolerable wrath to appear, and ...table rivers of brimstone, those scorching flames ...his anger, must thou lye down for ever, oh for ever, ...ever, damn, think but a while how long is that. Might ...but the undone souls return, to describe the place of ...torments to their old companions, what a Language ...should wee hear? Might but *Dives* himself have been ...sent to his Jovial Brethren, that little thought where their ...departed Brother was, not what they themselves were ...having co... that a passionate intreater would have ...beg'd the... from sin, that led to all that endless ...woe. How... would have disturbed them in the midst ...of their merriments and feastings, and even have made ...their hearts to quake, and their hair stand an end with ...his terrible expressions? But, Reader, if thou art ...one, who will be frightned from Hell by no descrip...tions, but of those that have seen it, thy feeling is ...like to prevent thy fear. What say'st thou then after ...all? Art thou yet resolved to prepare for Death, and ...prevent Damnation, or not? If thou art, happy man ...thou, that ever thou wast born, but if thou art not, I can ...say no more, but even take thy course, and when ...thou feelest the event, then say, *Whether sound Repentance ...will do any good, but not been a sheep and safe, a pitiful and ...happy way, to have prevented everlasting misery?* But the ...good Lord have mercy upon thee, and work these con...victions with power upon thy soul, whilst they may do ...thee any good.

I shall finish all with a word or two to all those that truly love and fear the Lord. *Oh Sirs, you that have known God, and are interested in his favour, and are well acquainted*

at the Throne of his Grace, to which you have fled in
trouble and need, made your recourse, and thence
ceived seasonable comfort and supply. All you to whom
or is no stronger work, now arise and bestake your selves to
with all serious speed and zeal. Call your selves down before
bewailing your own sins, and the sins of the Land,
in the gap to stop the further proceedings of his wrath,
may not rout us up from being a people, nee dot so far
off, that we should continue to be a wicked and rebellious
ple; for their destruction from the Lord will certainly
portion. Sanctify a solemn fast, remove the Rod, and above
to work those ends whereunto it appointed.

I have endeavoured to shew you, and your
are sensible of it, what sins wee are
pray that every abominable thing may
amongst us, and those blessed works accomplisht,
would make us in the eye of God and man, a
glorious and happy. Beg earnestly that the Gospel
bee advanc't, Holiness encouraged, Wickedness
prest and punish't, our Divisions healed; that from
Prince upon the Throne, to the Beggar upon the
hill, there may bee an effectual Reformation of all
have done amiss, that we may yet finde favour in
sight of God, and enjoy his residence, and gra
presence amongst us; that he may delight in us, and
joyce over us to do us good. Both alone, and in Co
panies, as you have opportunity, besiege Heaven
your humble and affectionate prayers. God will
be deaf to your cry, he knows your voice, which co
from your very Soul: hee will not reject the Petitio
you present with pure hands: your prayers are
delight, all you that are his humble, upright ones: Th
you must now prevail, or wee are undone. Though
may be a people hated, derided, and undervalued by th
among

amongst whom you live, yet must your intercessions be accepted on their behalf, through our great Intercessor, or else they are like to perish. 'Tis you that must run with your Censers, and stand betwixt the living and the Dead, that so the Plague may be stayed. It is the incense and perfume of your prayers, that through Christ must appease an angry God, and clear an infected Air. It is not the Lip-service of the prophane sinner, or the formal hypocrite, that will do us any good; let his prayers bee by heart, or by rote, within book, or without, that makes no great matter, but if hee bee one whose heart is far from God, and whose life is a provocation to him, who still goes on in his sin, let him bee never so devout in the Church, or on his knees, and roar and weep with never so much passion and noise, the howling of a Dog is as acceptable to God, as such hypocritical Devotion. Shall the tongue that was just now Curing and Swearing, come presently and fall a praying, and think to bee accepted? Doth God delight to hear his Name taken in vain, as these senseless sinners do in their solemnest services? No, no, but it is the fervent prayer of you who are indeed righteous, that's like to be effectual and prevailing. You have the Spirit of Supplication interceding within you, assisting you with inutterable sighs and groans; (whether with a Form, or without, makes not the difference) and you have a powerful Advocate enforcing your requests; wherefore to God betake your selves, lye at his feet. Plead with him for Rulers and People, his Church and Ministers, your Friends and Enemies, City and Country, your Towns and Families, and for your own Souls: follow him day and night, and give him no rest, till hee shall bee in Heaven, and have mercy, and establish his Zion a praise both amongst us, and in the whole Earth.

And be exhorted also now to lay about you all you can,

for

for the awakening and convincing of the poor creatures that are next you, that Death may not finde them so unready. If you bee in places where the Infection is dayly feared, improve such a time with ignorant and careless ones; many may bee willing to hear you now, who would have taught at seasons discourse a few dayes hence. When they begin to look on Death as a reckoning, and not far off, the fears of it will a little cure them of their distractions, and they'l no longer take Heaven and Hell for jesting matters. This is not a time, Sirs, to be slighted of Religion, now if ever Holiness will be in request, and boldly shew it selfe. *Afford your Neighbours that help you can for their precious Soules. Go to their Houses, and lend them good Books, and discourse of those matters, you may easily perceive to most concerne their case.* And if this bee your direction for the future in this work, which would never have you cease, whilst you serve and converse about you, we noble men, whose Eternity either of happinesse or woe, depends upon their well or ill improvement of this uncertain moment.

And lastly, *All you holy Souls, be incouraged thereby, and confidently to receive the sentence of death within your selves.* Let your spirits revive within you, when you shall see the waggons that come to fetch you to your Joseph, even your Lord, who is gone before to prepare a place for you. Let those that have lived estranged from God, careless of his Service, mad of the World, and running after their pleasures, let them be dejected at the News of Death, the Sad News, that they must leave all their Treasures, and their joys, & be carried into a state they thought not of, nor prepared for, there to bee reckoned with for their worldly, loose, and sinfully life, and to bear the effects of their folly for ever. But all you to whom sin hath been a burden, and Religion your work and pleasure, whose hearts have been taken up with Gods dealings with mankinde,

and deeply affected with his mysterious Love in
who have taken it for the business of your Lives?
work out your Salvation: In a word, who have chosen
for your Portion, and lov'd him more than all things
are below, and closed with Christ as your onely Saviour,
delivers you both from Sin and Hell, and have taken
holy Spirit for your Sanctifier and Guide, not allow-
your selves in known sin, but labouring in all things
approve your selves to God. Now lift up your heads,
and comfort your hearts, when you see the day of Death
approach. Let not Carnal ones see you dismay'd, for this
will make them suspect Religion to be a fancy: so much
doth it contradict your Profession, and disgrace both it
and you.

Nor let the kinde of death by which you may be sent
hence, be pretended as any ground of your trouble
therein. Why should not God choose your Death for
you, as well as all other things? And let it be of what
kinde it will, you have very great reason quietly to submit
to it. Let Death be welcome and there is nothing in a
Plague that can hurt you, or need daunt you. Be very
humble of Gods hand now stretcht out against us, and
so far manifest a reverence and awe; and with a re-
liance on him, use all due means for self-preservation.
But for your selves, dread not a Plague, nor any thing
else can do upon you; it can but kill your Bodies, and
help your Souls out of their prisons, and is there any
hurt in that? Let the Spots when you see them, be re-
garded by you, as no other than Tokens of your Fathers
love, which he hath sent to shew he is mindful of you,
and hath now sent to fetch you nearer to himself: What
though it be a rough Messenger, as Jaylors use to be, yet
the Message may well make you entertain him with
smiles. If it came to lead you forth to Execution in-
deed, you might well tremble; though not so much for it
self,

self, as the errand is come on. Oh the stark ma
of those blinde and miserable ones, that are afraid
Plague, and not of Hell; that run away from the Sick
and run on in Sin? But talk not you of loathsome S
Why Sirs, do they go any deeper than your flesh?
those that have made their Carcasses their care, be
bled for this? Why what have you any thing mor
your bodies to do? Any service for which you
need them? And need you care, how the old cloth
rent and torn, so long as you shall never wear, no
them more? Part willingly with your rags, you
clothes a making, which shall silence your compla
Swell, and break, and stink flesh if thou wilt, I
not bee troubled with thee long. When thou pro
edst most, then I was at the worst; thou hast bee
much mine enemy, that I cannot but rejoyce in thy
foes. If my tongue must needs complain, and my
and smell be offended with my self, all this shall
reach my heart. What care I for thy Sores and P
so long as my Soul's in health? Go make haste, lon
thee to thy Grave, and there turn to Rottenness
Filth: I pitty thee not, nor will I ever sympathize
thee more.

Nor yet complain of the Suddenness of this D
Leave this to them that would serve God, when they
nothing else to do, that put off all to a Lord have
upon mee; and a few good Prayers at their last
But what Death can be sudden to you, who are not
pared for Death; but have made it the business of
lives, to fit your selves for it.

Nor let it be your trouble that your Friends for
you, and are all afraid to come nigh you. Why
would you have them to do? they cannot rebuke y
Disease, or Delay your Death, or do any thing for
in the world you are going to; nor do you need
should

could. Counsel I hope you have given them in time of health, and therefore it may the less trouble you, that you cannot speak to them now. To take a solemn leave of them, is a poor formality to trouble the thoughts of a dying man. Whatever help they could afford, you'l quickly bee past all need of it, or them. Bear the want of their company or assistance a day or two, and you will never desire or want it more. Wherefore chear up your Spirits, and bee not cast down, but to the Rock of Ages betake your selves; who never faill'd you, nor any that placed their confidence in him; hee's a present help in time of trouble; hee'l come in to you when your doors are shut up; hee'l stand by your bed-side, when no other friend dare.

Now Sirs, what's your God, your Saviour worth? A God to support you, when the world fails you: A Saviour to receive you, when you leave the world. Now is not an holy Life comfortable to your review? Do you now repent of the cost and pains you have been at, or the sufferings you have undergone for God? Was it not worth while to bee laught and wondred at for your holy diligence, which laid in store for such a day as this, and brings you support, when the hearts of others fail for fear? Now Sirs, you are come to the end of your Pilgrimage; the long-long-looke for day is come, Sin and Satan, the World and the Flesh, shall never trouble you more for ever. Now shall your prayers at length bee all heard, your Complainings ended, your Expectations and Longings satisfied, and accomplished. Cheer up, cheer up, brave Souls, but one step more, and then you are at your Fathers house. Methinks I see the Arms of Christ stretcht out to receive you, and Angels waiting to conduct you to his Arms. Fear not, nor bee dismay'd, confidently resign your Souls to him, who laid down his life for you. The darkneſſe

lasts but a little while, and presently you will come to the open light; oh the difference you will instantly finde, betwixt your dark and silent room, and Mansion that shall be assigned you in your Fathers house. To which the stateliest Palace is Loathsome Dungeon. Oh what Acclamations and Hallelujahs, what cries, Holy, Holy, Holy! what glorious praises, and loud songs! What Crowns and Scepters, what Riches and Bounty will your ears and eyes be presently stricken with, that you will be amazed, and wonder whither you are come; and where you have been all this while, that never heard, nor saw these things before. So infinitely will they exceed your highest thoughts, when God helps you to the clearest views. But all your strangeness and amazement will soon be over. Surprisal of joy will dissipate and succeed them! This is the Glory the hopes whereof upheld you all your dayes, and the glimmerings and fore-tastes did so oft revive you. Now you shall at length see the Lord who lov'd you, and gave himself for you, and whom your Souls have loved. Oh is there not life in his smiles! And if he smiles upon you, all the Angels and Saints will bid you welcome. His beck and pleasure it is that rules all. There you shall be entred into that throng of blessed Spirits, yours shall their Employments be, their priviledges shall be yours. Then shall your understandings be enlightned, your affections raised, and all your capacities widened, and shall be fill'd with suitable truth and goodness; the lumber-powers of your souls, shall then be awakened into their high Celestial Life. Then shall you be nearer to your Saviour, than *John*, when he leaned on his bosome; you shall taste the full fruits of his dear and costly love. Then, then blessed Soul thou shalt know, and see, and feel, and enjoy thy God, and be brought as near to him, as thou thy self canst desire, and receive as much from him, as

by nature is capable. The Lord thy Redeemer having by his Blood and Spirit, accomplished his whole design upon thee, and fitted thee for, will lead thee into the Father's presence, and so thou shalt enter upon the state of constant and full communion with him; And shalt be always spending an Eternity in Contemplating, and Admiring his Excellencies and Glories, and singing his Praises, in the warm breathings and out-goings of thy heart after him, and in the ravishments of highest mutual Love, and dearest Complacency, betwixt thy enlarged Soul, and infinite Essential goodness, even the God of Love. This thou shalt have, but what this is, though I had leasure and skill to say ten thousand times more than I have done, thou couldst not know the thousandth part, till thou dost enjoy it. Wherefore with an holy impatience, and eager joy, enter upon the possession of all the Treasures of Love, which Death comes to translate thee to. Bid it heartily welcome, open thy breast, and let it strike; 'Tis but the prick of a Pin, the smart's ceast as soon as it's in; the Pangs of it are gone in a Trice. See they are over already, all pain was extinct with that last groan, and now thou art entred upon thy joy. *Parents blessed Souls, whom I hope shortly to follow, and with you to celebrate an everlasting Communion, in the Presence, Praise, and Love of the Great Jehovah, and his Son Christ Jesus, to whom in the Unity of the Spirit, be rendred all Honour, Power, and Glory, now and Eternally.* Amen.

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